

COVID-19 Update: FAQs for Current Students

The International Center is committed to supporting you during this global health crisis. The global COVID-19 situation is dynamic and quickly changing, and so is the guidance on how to minimize its impact on international students. Since we are in an environment of evolving information, please make sure to regularly check the International Center's [COVID-19 update page](#) [1] for important information and updates.

Below are answers to immigration related questions regarding the move to online instruction through the end of the Winter 2020 semester (including final exams). We will keep updating this page with new information or guidance as they become available. If you have other questions and concerns, please email the International Center at icenter@umich.edu [2]. We will continue to compile all the questions and provide answers here.

Immigration Status

How does switching to all online courses affect my immigration status?

U.S. colleges and universities received guidance from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) which allows students to continue their Winter 2020 semester courses online without jeopardizing their immigration status. The Student and Visitor Exchange Program (SEVP) has confirmed that "If a school closes temporarily but offers online instruction or another alternative learning procedure, nonimmigrant students should participate in online or other alternate learning procedures and remain in active status in SEVIS." SEVP also confirmed that international students may take full-time courses online for this semester, either from the U.S. or from abroad. You need to be enrolled full-time, participate in your online courses, and make normal progress toward your degree in order to maintain your immigration status. If you continue to do these things, your SEVIS record and I-20 will remain in active status, regardless of where you are participating in online classes.

Does the new grading system for online courses affect my immigration status?

No, the new [grading system](#) [3] for the Winter 2020 semester will not affect your immigration status.

If I move to a new U.S. address, even temporarily due to isolation measures, do I need to report it within 10 days? How do I report it?

Yes, you need to report any change of residential address in the U.S. to the federal government, within

10 days of the change. Please follow our [guidelines](#) [4] for updating your address. Please remember that your “current” address needs to remain a U.S. address, even if you have returned home for the remainder of the Winter 2020 semester.

Travel

I have departed the U.S., or plan to leave soon, but I do not have a valid travel signature on my I-20/D-2019. What should I do?

F-1 students who wish to depart the U.S. and need a new valid travel signature may submit a reprint request online and have the new form shipped to them. You may use the form [Request to Replace Lost, Stolen, and Damaged I-20](#) [5]. Please select the reason "Travel" and be sure to set up shipping with [eShip Global](#) [6]. J-1 students can submit a [DS-2019 replacement request](#) [7] and set up shipping as well.

Will the five-month rule apply to me if I return home for the Winter 2020 semester and do not return to U-M until the Fall semester?

Under normal circumstances, if an international student were to remain outside of the U.S. for five or more months, they would need a new initial I-20 in order to resume their studies at U-M. This is known as the five-month rule.

If you are maintaining full-time status until the end of the Winter 2020 semester (see above for more information about online courses), then you are entitled to your annual vacation period this summer. According to the immigration regulations, an F-1 or J-1 student is in status during the annual (or summer) vacation if the student is eligible and intends to register for the next term. If you maintain your immigration status by continuing to be enrolled full-time in online courses for Winter 2020, then the five-month rule will not apply to you, according to a recent statement from SEVP. Remember that you must return to campus to maintain your immigration status when in-person classes resume.

I have left the U.S. for the remainder of the Winter 2020 semester. Will I be able to come back to the U.S.?

The current global situation is so fluid, it is impossible to predict whether further restrictions will be put in place by the U.S. government for travelers returning from high risk countries, or if international travel to the U.S. will be restricted due to the situation in the U.S.

You will need to check the travel and visa restrictions that may be in place at the time you are planning to return to the U.S. since the situation is changing daily. If you are currently outside the U.S. or plan to travel outside the U.S., we recommend that you continue to monitor the [travel updates by the CDC](#) [8] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). The International Center is carefully monitoring updates from the CDC, SEVP, USCIS, and Department of State, and will update our website and communicate changes to students as we receive new information.

My visa has expired, or will expire before I plan to return to the U.S. If I leave the U.S. now, will I need a new visa, or can I re-enter on an expired visa?

If you leave or have left the U.S. and your visa will expire by the date you wish to re-enter the U.S., then

you will need to obtain a new visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate before you can re-enter the U.S. (Canadian citizens do not need a visa to enter the U.S.) The U.S. Department of State announced in March 2020 that [routine U.S. visa issuance has been suspended indefinitely worldwide](#). [9]

If you will be travelling to Canada, Mexico, or adjacent islands, please contact the International Center to see if you are eligible to return to the U.S. with automatic visa revalidation. In March 2020, the U.S. partially closed the land borders with Canada and Mexico to all non-essential travel, but these closures should not affect students who wish to return to the U.S. for their studies.

My visa is expiring, and I am currently unable to travel to my home country. What should I do?

Your visa has no impact on your immigration status in the U.S. You may stay in the U.S. with an expired F-1 or J-1 visa as long as you maintain your immigration status by being in possession of a valid I-20 or DS-2019 and by fulfilling the normal enrollment requirements by maintaining your enrollment as all courses have moved to online only for the remainder of the Winter 2020 semester. (Canadian citizens do not need a visa to enter the U.S.)

I have left the U.S., will complete my program at U-M this semester, and do not plan to return to the U.S. Do I need to submit a departure notice to the International Center?

No, you do not need to submit a departure notice to the International Center if you are continuing to maintain your immigration status by remaining enrolled in full-time online courses or have been approved for a reduced course load authorization for the Winter 2020 semester. You may submit an [insurance waiver request form](#) [10] if you no longer wish to continue to be covered by the international student health insurance policy.

Employment

I have an on-campus job. May I continue that work remotely from my home in the U.S.? May I continue that work remotely from my home country?

Yes, SEVP has issued special guidance confirming that if the current on-campus employment has transitioned to remote work or the employment can be done through remote means, students may continue to engage in on-campus employment remotely.

I have returned home for the remainder of the Winter 2020 semester, but I was also approved for CPT (Curricular Practical Training) this semester. May I continue to work remotely on CPT for this Winter 2020 semester while I am abroad?

Yes, SEVP has issued special guidance that eligible students may engage in CPT during their time abroad this Winter semester, provided they are enrolled in a program of study of which the CPT is an integral component, the Designated School Official (DSO) has authorized the CPT in advance, and either the employer has an office outside the United States or the employer can assess student engagement and attainment of learning objectives electronically. The course enrollment for Winter semester may be online, but all other normal enrollment requirements for the Winter 2020 semester still apply.

You may find more information about CPT [here](#) [11]. You will need to meet all of the normal eligibility

criteria, complete all normal requirements, and gather all of the required documents. Once you have done so, then you may submit your CPT request, including all of the required documents, by email to icenter@umich.edu [2].

Can I apply for CPT (Curricular Practical Training) for my summer internship in the U.S. while I am outside the U.S.?

Yes, the International Center will continue to process your request as normal unless we receive guidance that indicates otherwise. Please refer to our answer above regarding your ability to travel back to the U.S. if you are currently outside the U.S. or you plan to leave soon. See the question above for information on how to apply for CPT.

What should I do if my CPT employment dates change?

You should email new documentation from the employer indicating the updated dates. A new offer letter is preferred, but we will accept email documentation from the employer as well. We will then update your CPT authorization to reflect the new dates and will generate a new CPT I-20 for you.

What should I do if my CPT employment will now require me to work remotely?

You should email new documentation from the employer indicating the change in work location. A new offer letter or email documentation from the employer is acceptable. If the work will take place remotely from your home, then you should confirm where you are currently living so we may update your SEVIS record with the correct information. We will not generate a new CPT I-20 for you since the remark indicating that you will be working remotely will not appear on a printed I-20, but it will be reflected in your SEVIS record.

What should I do if my CPT internship is withdrawn?

You should email the International Center with your official notification (whether that is an email from the employer or a copy of an official withdrawal letter). You should do this as soon as possible since we will need to cancel your CPT authorization in SEVIS. You should also contact your department and withdraw from the CPT course you were enrolled in (if needed for the CPT authorization).

I need to apply for OPT (Optional Practical Training). Can I do this from elsewhere in the U.S.? Can I do it from outside the U.S.?

You must be physically present in the U.S. at the time you submit your OPT application to USCIS. The International Center will continue to process OPT requests as we receive them. If you have not applied for OPT yet, but plan to do so, we strongly encourage you to review the [OPT information](#) [12] on our site and submit your request via email to icenter@umich.edu [2] as soon as possible.

Can I leave the U.S. and return home after I mail my OPT application to USCIS? Will I be allowed to re-enter the U.S. to start working once my application is approved?

Yes, you can leave the U.S. when an OPT application is pending with USCIS, but there has always been an element of risk in doing so. The basic risk factor is that if you receive correspondence from USCIS in the mail, such as a Request for Evidence (RFE), you would not be there to respond. This has always been true, and in these extraordinary times, it remains so.

In the best-case scenario, if your application is approved without any issues, your EAD will be delivered to a valid U.S. address (see the OPT online course for more information). USCIS will not send your EAD to an address outside the U.S. You will need to arrange for someone to send you the EAD which you should have with you when you re-enter the U.S. Please be aware that you are still considered to be an F-1 student while on OPT, and you will need to have all your [valid travel documents](#) [13] with you when you re-enter the U.S. Please refer to our answer above regarding your ability to travel back to the U.S. if you plan to leave soon.

Will the current [suspension of U.S. visa issuance](#) [9] affect the processing of OPT?

All visas are issued by the U.S. Department of State. Optional Practical Training (OPT), on the other hand, is adjudicated by USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services), which is an agency under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The temporary suspension of U.S. visa issuance worldwide will not affect the adjudication of your OPT application. As of this date, USCIS continues to process OPT applications.

Will the temporary closure of USCIS field offices and suspension of USCIS in-person services affect my OPT application?

As of March 2020, [USCIS temporarily closed its domestic field offices](#) [14] and has suspended routine in-person services until at least May 3 to help slow the spread of COVID-19. However, USCIS staff will continue to perform duties that do not involve direct contact with the public. OPT applications are adjudicated at the USCIS Service Centers, not at the field offices, and USCIS has not closed any service centers. In addition, OPT adjudications do not involve any contact with the public. For these reasons, we do not anticipate your OPT application being affected by this recent closure of USCIS field offices. However, OPT processing times typically do increase for students completing their studies at the end of Winter 2020. This is due to the large increase in OPT applications because most international students in the U.S. complete their studies in April and May each year.

Post-Graduation Options

I will complete my program requirements at the end of Winter 2020. After I graduate, what are my options?

You have a number of options below. Please remember you do not need an appointment to submit your request while the International Center is closed, and that you should submit your request and documents via email:

- Remain in the U.S. and apply for [Optional Practical Training](#) [15] (for F-1 students) or [Academic Training](#) [16] for J-1 students).
- Pursue another degree at another institution in the United States and [transfer your SEVIS record](#) [17] to the new institution.
- Pursue another degree at U-M. Contact your admissions office for information about your admissions application and new I-20.
- Change to another immigration status (H-1B for example).
- Leave the U.S. and return home or travel to another country. You may remain in the U.S. during your grace period after your program end date (which you can find on your I-20 or DS-2019). The grace

period for F-1 students is 60 days and for J-1 students it is 30 days.

Spring/Summer Semester

The University of Michigan has announced all Spring/Summer 2020 classes will be online. Continuing students are not required to be enrolled during Spring/Summer, but they may choose to do so without any impact on their immigration status. Continuing students may also be eligible to work full-time on campus during the Spring/Summer semester, even if that work is done remotely this year. Students who meet the eligibility requirements for CPT may also be able to work in off-campus positions by following the normal CPT request process (see the “Employment” section above for more information).

Taxes and Social Security

How do I apply for my Social Security Number for my summer job now that the Social Security Administration has closed its offices?

If you urgently need to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN), email the Social Security Office at mi.fo.ann.arbor@ssa.gov [18] to request an in-person appointment. The Social Security Office will review your request and schedule an in-person appointment for you if they agree that your request is urgent. Please remember, though, that you do not need an SSN to begin working. If you cannot obtain an in-person appointment, you should wait until the Social Security Administration reopens their offices. We do not recommend applying for your SSN by mail, since you would need to mail your original documents to the local office, and there is a risk that your original documents could be lost.

Where can I go for tax help now that the International Center is closed?

The International Center staff are not tax experts. We provide [tax information](#) [19] to international students and scholars to help them file taxes. The information on our website does not substitute for advice from a qualified tax professional or the Internal Revenue Service.

The federal and Michigan state taxes have **a new filing deadline of July 15, 2020**. We recommend international students and scholars use [Glacier Tax Software](#) [20] to prepare their tax returns. Unfortunately, the state tax webinar was postponed, but we do have [detailed handouts](#) [21] from the webinar. However, you can use [Sprintax Software](#) [22] for filing your state taxes. You may also review the International Center’s [Tax Information Session](#) [23] for some general filing tips.

Am I eligible for the economic stimulus payment?

International students and scholars are eligible for the \$1,200 economic stimulus payment through the [CARES Act](#) [24] **if they meet all of the requirements listed below**. Since many international students and scholars are [nonresidents for U.S. tax purposes](#) [25], they will not be eligible for the payment.

The economic stimulus payment should be automatic if you are eligible for it, but you should also be able to track your payment on the [Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\) website](#) [26].

You will only be eligible for the payment if you:

- **Are a [resident for U.S. tax purposes](#)** [25]
 - If you are a resident for U.S. tax purposes for 2020, but not for 2019, you can claim the economic stimulus payment when you file Form 1040 with the IRS for tax year 2020. Your tax return for tax year 2020 will be due on April 15, 2021.
 - If you are a resident for U.S. tax purposes for 2019, [but not for 2020](#) [27], you are not eligible for the payment, and [should follow these instructions](#) [28] to return the payment to the IRS.
- Filed a federal tax return for the 2018 or 2019 tax year
- Have a U.S. social security number (SSN)
 - Note: Married couples who filed a joint tax return are ineligible if one person has an SSN and the other spouse has an ITIN or no number.
- Have an “adjusted gross income” of \$75,000 or less. You can find your “adjusted gross income” on your federal income tax return form (Form 1040). A reduced amount will be issued to individuals with an adjusted gross income between \$75,000 and \$99,000 per year.

For more information see the [Economic Impact Payment Information Center](#) [29] on the IRS website.

Why did I receive an economic stimulus payment? I am a [nonresident for U.S. tax purposes](#) [25]. What should I do?

Most likely, you received this payment because you filed a resident tax form for 2018 or 2019 instead of a nonresident tax form.

This probably happened because you used tax software that is designed for residents, and that software prepared the resident tax form (Form 1040) instead of the nonresident form (Form 1040NR). One example of tax software for residents is TurboTax but there are many others. In the future, be sure to use [Glacier Tax Prep](#) [20], the software that the International Center licenses for you, since it will prepare the correct nonresident tax form for you. It is available to all U-M/Ann Arbor international students and scholars.

If you received the economic stimulus check in error, you [should follow these instructions](#) [28] to return the payment to the IRS. Be sure to keep a copy of the check and of anything else that you send to the IRS.

Also, if you filed a resident tax return form in error for 2018 or 2019, you should correct that error by filing an amended tax return. [Glacier Tax Prep](#) [20] includes detailed instructions for preparing an amended tax return form in the FAQs that you will see once you have logged into Glacier Tax Prep.

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Source URL: <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/covid-19-update-faqs-current-students>

Links

[1] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/covid-19-updates>

[2] <mailto:icenter@umich.edu>

[3] <https://ro.umich.edu/records-registration/covid-19-winter-2020-grading>

[4] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/address-notification-requirement>

- [5] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/forms/request-replace-i20>
- [6] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/express-mail-through-eship-global>
- [7] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/forms/request-replace-ds2019>
- [8] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>
- [9] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/suspension-of-routine-visa-services.html>
- [10] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/forms/health-insurance-waiver-request-form-covid-19>
- [11] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/cpt>
- [12] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/opt>
- [13] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/travel-post-opt>
- [14] <https://www.uscis.gov/about-us/uscis-office-closings>
- [15] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/apply-opt>
- [16] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/j1-students/academic-training>
- [17] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/transferring-another-us-higher-education-institution>
- [18] <mailto:mi.fo.ann.arbor@ssa.gov>
- [19] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/tax>
- [20] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/tax/tax-software>
- [21] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/events/webinar-michigan-tax>
- [22] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sprintax-tax-prep-software>
- [23] https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1sURKHbWLF9BRK_L7KENpwWLTmUEXdABZkTkT6q0WTTk/edit#slide=id.p
- [24] <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/3548/text#toc-idC62A2A4676F44E44B6A0D677C490FD17>
- [25] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/tax/laws-and-filing-requirements#purpose>
- [26] <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payments>
- [27] <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payment-information-center#eligibility>
- [28] <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payment-information-center#more>
- [29] <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payment-information-center>