March 13th Letter from International Center Director: COVID-19 Situation: Important Updates for Students

Dear International Student,

Many developments have occurred in the past week regarding the COVID-19 situation. The University of Michigan International Center and Public Affairs websites detail this week’s developments. However, I wanted to make sure that you understand these important highlights.

**Online Course Format**

- Classes for the rest of the semester will be in an online format. Your faculty should provide you with messaging regarding your courses.
- All final exams will be offered remotely in alternative formats. Students will not be required to come to campus for instruction or exams for the remainder of this semester.

**Immigration-related implications of online courses**

- Due to the Coronavirus, the U.S. Government has relaxed online course restrictions for F-1 and J-1 students.
- Should you remain in the U.S. to complete the semester, and continue to take a full course of study, you will maintain legal immigration status.
- Should you decide to leave the U.S. and continue to take a full course of study, you will still be considered in active F-1 or J-1 student status.

**Leaving the U.S. before the end of Winter Term**

- Please make sure your I-20/DS-2019 signature will be current at the time of your return. Please visit this webpage for information on re-entry procedures.
- If you would like to apply for a waiver of your required International Health Insurance (IHI) while you are outside the U.S., please read U-M International Student/Scholar Health Insurance Requirement and Enrollment Process. Look for the section called Temporary Absence from the U.S. - special procedure while COVID-19 campus measures are in effect.
- U-M encourages, but does not require, students who are able to leave campus for the rest of the Winter term.

**Post Completion Practical Training**
• If you are in your final term of study and plan to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT), please review the [deadlines](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/apply-opt#deadlines), which are not flexible. Remember that you cannot apply for OPT from outside the United States.

• J-1 students in their final term should follow the [guidelines](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/healthins/requirement-and-enrollment-process) for Academic Training (AT).

**Campus-based employment**

• If you are currently employed by the U-M (e.g., GSIs, student workers), please work with your supervisor to see what is expected. Alternative options may or may not be available.

**Health Insurance**

• For questions or concerns related to health insurance, please refer to the health insurance information on our website, and direct questions to the [health insurance advisor](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/healthins/requirement-and-enrollment-process).

• This [announcement](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/march-13th-letter-international-center-director-covid-19-situation-important-updates-students) explains COVID-19 insurance benefits and coverage.

**Commencement**

• Unfortunately, the formal commencement ceremony will be cancelled this year. Alternative ways for celebrating 2020 graduates are being explored.

**International Center**

• The IC, like the rest of the University, remains open. We will be exploring options for virtual advising to keep in touch and will offer some smaller events and workshops.

• We continue to monitor U-M and immigration related developments.

• We will reach out to you as more information and guidance becomes available. We will post messages on the IC homepage announcements section and also send special emails like this when there are multiple issues to highlight.

We appreciate that this is unknown territory and can feel overwhelming. We wish you the best as you navigate these next days and weeks and are here to support you. We remind you of campus resources such as [CAPS](https://publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/), [UHS](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/travel-outside-us-reentry), and [Wolverine Wellness](https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/healthins/requirement-and-enrollment-process), which will also remain available to you during this time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Judith Pennywell
Director, International Center
University of Michigan

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**Links**

[4] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/apply-opt#deadlines