

Planning for Fall Term 2020: New DHS Procedures and U-M Updates

On Monday, July 6, the U.S. government issued [new guidance](#) [1] for F-1 students for the Fall 2020 Term.

We know the announcement has caused stress and frustration for many in our campus community, and are working to limit the disruption of this new guidance for new and current students. U-M President Schlissel and senior leaders [have issued a statement](#) [2] expressing U-M's strong disagreement with the new policies. The International Center is disappointed that DHS will not extend the same flexible online guidance issued last March to the Fall semester, in light of the ongoing COVID crisis.

For Fall Term 2020, the University of Michigan will move to a [hybrid model](#) [3], with courses offered in formats that include in-person, remote and mixed instruction, which provides flexibility for international students on campus. U-M is working to ensure that international students will have in-person and hybrid options for their classes, which will allow our international students to stay in the U.S. The Registrar's office and the schools and colleges are diligently working to code courses and sections aligned with the hybrid model and to assign in person classes to appropriately physically distanced spaces. The plan is to allow students to adjust course schedules beginning on August 7th, taking this new model and their immigration requirements into account.

As the Ann Arbor campus is offering a hybrid model, the parts of the announcement that refer to institutions offering online instruction only or to institutions resuming normal operations only do not apply to U-M. The guidance about institutions "adopting a hybrid model" does apply to U-M. Based on what we currently know, this is how the new Department of Homeland Security guidance will affect new and current U-M students.

New and Current Students on the Ann Arbor campus

- The usual [full-time enrollment requirement](#) [4] for F-1 students still applies, but you may take more than one class or three credit hours online since U-M is offering a mixture of in-person and online instruction in response to COVID-19. However, you must take at least one class in the in-person mode of instruction, and you should only take the minimum number of online classes required to make normal progress in your degree program. Thus, if you have a choice between an in-person/mixed or online mode of instruction for a particular course, you should register for the in person or mixed option.

- The DHS announcement also states that international students must depart the U.S. (or transfer schools) if their enrolling institution changes its operational stance mid-semester and transitions to online instruction only. **We believe that this would apply to the University of Michigan only if we transition to online only instruction at some point prior to November 30th**, the date when remote instruction is scheduled to begin for everyone. The only scenario in which we make such a switch is if we have severe COVID occurrence in our community and it is deemed absolutely necessary to go online only.

New or Current Students Residing Outside of the United States

- You are permitted to enroll in a completely online course of study, but will not be granted or continue to hold F-1 student status for this period. You are not bound by regulatory requirements affecting F-1 students while enrolled overseas, so the full-time enrollment requirement will not apply. Since you will not be in F-1 status, this time spent abroad will not be counted toward the one full academic year in F-1 status required prior to becoming eligible for certain immigration benefits, including Curricular Practical Training or Optional Practical Training.
- Whether you enroll remotely for fall or defer your admission to a future semester, you will need a new I-20 with the appropriate program start date for the term when you will return to campus. You can use that I-20 to enter or re-enter the U.S. or to apply for a visa if needed.

Determining Which U-M Courses Are Online

U-M is assigning codes to all U-M courses, which will allow students to determine whether or not a particular course is considered to be in-person, mixed (hybrid) or online. The Office of the Registrar is working with academic departments to code classes accordingly and to assign classrooms with appropriate physical distancing. These changes are underway and will be finalized by August 7, so that students may adjust their course registration accordingly.

Optional Practical Training (OPT) Students

The new guidance does not directly impact those on full-time, post-completion OPT. Student visa holders on OPT will maintain their active SEVIS status as long as they continue to comply with F-1 regulations.

New I-20 Forms

The International Center and U-M Admissions Offices are working on plans for the required reissuing of I-20 documents. The reissued documents will include a statement confirming that U-M is not operating entirely online for Fall Term 2020. The document reissuance will be completed by the three-week DHS deadline. As we have more than 7000 documents to release, we appreciate your patience.

Visa Appointments

Students are advised to monitor the websites of their nearest US embassy or consulate to determine when appointments are available and when the consulates are reopening. Whether or not you plan to come for Fall or Winter, you should go ahead and apply for a visa as soon as you are able. Studying remotely in fall should not preclude you from applying for your visa to come during the winter semester. Should your appointment be cancelled because the consulate has not yet re-opened, do reschedule as soon as you can.

If you are a continuing student and are currently overseas, please double check that your passport and visa are still valid. Valid visas are unexpired (by the date you plan to re-enter) and have multiple entries.

Reminders of Other Concerns Facing Some International Students

- Restrictions still in place which do not allow entry of those who [spent the previous 14 days in China, Iran, the European Schengen area, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, or Brazil](#) [5]
- The Departments of State and Homeland Security have still not released guidance on procedures that will affect Chinese students with prior work or study experience at institutions involved with [“military-civil fusion strategy”](#). [6]

Updates

This information is fluid and could change as additional clarifications are released and advocacy occurs. We will continue to make updates to this Announcement/FAQ link on our website. Please be sure to check this page frequently. Unless there is a significant or critical change you need to be made immediately aware of, we will not email you directly.

We are also planning to offer a virtual chat, featuring an International Student and Scholar staff member immigration advisers on Monday, July 13th. Please check for an announcement and registration on the IC website later this week.

There will continue to be media reporting –including social media - on these issues which may or may not be accurate. There are legal cases to fight the implementation of this guidance which may or may not be successful. The IC reminds you that we actively monitor many reputable news and legal sources and advocacy efforts, but we base our interpretations on official governmental sources and utilize those sources when we share information with you.

The IC continues to value and support international students and scholars, to work with all areas of the university community to advance international education, and to advocate for immigration policies that best serve international students and scholars.

We will all get through this if we work together.

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Source URL: <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/planning-fall-term-2020-new-dhs-procedures-and-u-m-updates>

Links

[1] <https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/bcm2007-01.pdf>

[2] <https://president.umich.edu/news-communications/statements/statement-on-homeland-security-policy-affecting-international-students/>

[3] <https://record.umich.edu/articles/university-to-offer-in-person-classes-for-fall-semester/>

[4] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/enrollment-requirements>

[5] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/from-other-countries.html>

[6] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/proclamation-suspension-entry-nonimmigrants-certain-students-researchers-peoples-republic-china/>