

Fall Term 2020 FAQs for Continuing Students

This page will be updated with new information as it becomes available. If you have other questions and concerns, please email the International Center at icenter@umich.edu [1].

Whether you plan to come to campus for the Fall Term or are considering remote study, please be sure to read [the Campus Maize and Blueprint](#) [2] web page for detailed information about U-M's plans for Fall Term 2020, and check it often for updates. If you plan to return to campus for the Fall Term, be sure to review the recently updated (8/25/20) information about the [pre-arrival enhanced social distancing requirement](#) [3], and about the COVID-19 prevention measures students arriving from international or domestic locations via plane, bus or train are expected to follow.

During Fall Term, courses will be offered in formats that include in-person, remote and mixed (ie: hybrid) instruction, depending on curricular needs. Students will have the opportunity to adjust their class schedule [beginning August 7th](#) [4]. After Friday, November 20, there will be a nine-day-long Thanksgiving break, and then all classes will resume remotely on Monday, November 30. Classes end December 8, with finals running December 10-18.

This FAQ applies to continuing students only. If you are a new student and have not yet entered the United States, please refer to the [FAQs for Newly Admitted Students](#) [5]. The FAQs for Newly Admitted Students also apply if you are transferring to U-M after attending an institution located in the U.S. or changing to a new academic level at U-M.

IMMIGRATION STATUS

As a current, continuing F-1 or J-1 student, can I take all remote classes, or must I take a mixture of in-person, mixed and remote classes?

There are no in-person enrollment requirements for current students, who were enrolled in Winter (and/or Spring/Summer) 2020. You can take the most appropriate courses for your degree program as long as you maintain a full course of study (or have an approved [Reduced Course Load](#) [6]). You should check with your academic unit to make sure that your proposed course schedule, including your choices of in-person, mixed (hybrid) or remote classes, meets their requirements for your degree program.

You must 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 or DS-2019 will remain in active status.

I would like to study remotely inside the U.S. but from outside Michigan during the Fall Term. Will I lose my F-1 or J-1 status?

As long as you remain enrolled full-time, participate in your online courses, and make normal progress toward your degree, you will maintain your F-1 or J-1 status. You must also [update your current address in Wolverine Access](#) [7]. **However, be sure to check with your academic unit, since they may require you to be in residence on the Ann Arbor campus.** You may also be required to be in residence on the Ann Arbor campus if you are a Graduate Student Instructor or a Graduate Student Research Assistant.

Do I need a new I-20 or a formal letter from the University in order to return to the U.S.?

No. Current DHS guidance does not require this. You can use the most recent I-20 you received from U-M to enter the U.S. If you want, you can also [download and print this letter](#) [8], which explains U-M's plans for the Fall Term.

Once U-M switches to remote classes on November 30, or if U-M must switch to all-remote classes earlier than that, will I be required to leave the U.S.?

No. You will be able to maintain your F-1 or J-1 status through participating in remote classes as long as you are enrolled full-time.

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. If you need to move to temporary housing for a COVID related period of isolation or quarantine of more than 10 days, you should also update your address. Be sure to change it again when you move back into your regular residence. Follow our [guidelines](#) [7] for updating your address, and please remember that your "current" address needs to remain a U.S. address.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Will the mandatory U-M International Health Insurance plan cover COVID-19 testing and treatment?

Yes. The International Student/Scholar Health Insurance Plan covers testing and treatment. [GradCare](#) [9] also covers COVID-19 testing and treatment. Please review the [health insurance FAQs](#) [10] for details. If you still have questions, contact the [International Center's Health Insurance Advisor](#). [11]

Does the mandatory health insurance requirement apply to me if I study remotely?

If you are studying remotely in the United States, the health insurance requirement will continue to apply to you.;

If you plan to study remotely outside the United States, you can request a [Fall Term 2020 COVID-19 waiver](#) [12] .

TRAVEL AND VISAS

If I plan to leave the U.S. during the Fall Term and need a new travel signature in order to return, what should I do?

We are developing some new travel signature procedures. Please check this page for updates.

If I am enrolled for classes but have been or will be outside the U.S. for more than five months, will I lose my F-1 status?

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. However, according to the SEVP guidance currently in effect, if you were enrolled full-time for online courses during Winter Term 2020 and continue full-time enrollment during Fall Term 2020, then the five-month rule will not apply to you. As long as your visa stamp is valid (unexpired with multiple entries) you can use it to re-enter the U.S.

I would like to study remotely from outside the U.S. during the Fall Term. Will I lose my F-1 or J-1 status?

No. As long as you are enrolled full-time, participate in your online courses, and make normal progress toward your degree, your SEVIS record and I-20 will remain in active status.

Will my plans to come to campus be affected by travel restrictions?

The [COVID-19 entry restrictions](#) [13] the U.S. has imposed are still in effect. The Department of State has

[announced](#) [14] that students from the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom, and Ireland can apply for an F-1 visa to enter the U.S. We advise having this [announcement from Customs and Border Protection](#) [15] available when you travel to campus since it confirms that that airlines should allow students from these countries to board flights to the U.S. and may also be helpful at the U.S. port of entry. J-1 students from the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom, and Ireland can request a “national interest exception” (NIE) when they apply for a visa. The NIE will allow travel to the U.S.

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 is resuming routine visa services in a [phased-in process, based on local conditions](#) [16]. If you need a new visa, check with the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest you to find out more about their plans and about your options for scheduling an appointment for a visa interview. Try to schedule your visa interview appointment as soon as possible.

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](#) [17]. 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, whether they cross land borders or take flights.

If I need to renew my F-1 or J-1 visa, will an in-person visa interview be required?

Due to a recent [U.S. State Department policy change](#) [18], you may not need to have an in-person visa interview if your visa expired within the last 24 months. This policy change is in effect through December 31, 2020. If you need to renew your visa to re-enter the U.S., check the website of the U.S. embassy or consulate where you plan to apply for your visa for detailed information on what services are currently available as well as for eligibility information and instructions on applying for a visa without an interview.

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 your on-campus employment has transitioned to remote work or can be performed through remote means, you may continue to engage in on-campus employment remotely.

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 are interested in applying for OPT, review the [OPT information on the International Center website](#) [19].

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 because you should have it 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 [valid travel documents](#) [20] with you when you re-enter the U.S.

Please also remember that the COVID-19 entry restrictions the U.S. has imposed are still in effect, and could make it difficult or impossible to re-enter. If you have been in one of the countries [affected by these restrictions](#) [13] in the 14 days prior to seeking entry to the U.S., you will not be able to enter the U.S. Although the Department of State has [announced](#) [14] that students from the Schengen Area, the United Kingdom, and Ireland can apply for an F-1 visa to enter the U.S., we are still waiting for confirmation that Customs and Border Protection will allow entry to the U.S. under these circumstances

I am a J-1 student, are there any changes to Academic Training I should be aware of?

As Academic Training requirements are different than OPT, you should refer to [Academic Training for J-1 Students](#) [21] for guidance. The Department of State has confirmed that active J-1 students engaged in Academic Training can continue their Academic Training remotely in light of current circumstances.

TAXES AND SOCIAL SECURITY

How do I apply for my Social Security Number since Social Security Administration offices are still closed?

If you urgently need to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN), email the Social Security Office at mi.fo.ann.arbor@ssa.gov [22] 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 (including your passport) to the local office, and there is a risk that your original documents could be lost.

I have questions about U.S. taxes.

The filing deadline for both federal and state tax forms was **July 15, 2020**. If you did not file your tax forms, you should still do so. If you filed an extension form (Form 4868), be sure to file your tax return by the extension deadline of October 15, 2020. You may also review the International Center's [Tax Information Session](#) [23] for some general filing tips. The Glacier Tax Prep software is still available for you to use.

Reminder: International Center staff are not tax experts. The [tax information](#) [24] on our website does not substitute for advice from a qualified tax professional or the Internal Revenue Service.

Am I eligible for the economic stimulus payment?

The Internal Revenue Service's [Economic Impact Payment Information Center](#) [25] has detailed information eligibility for the economic stimulus payment. Since many international students and scholars are [nonresidents for U.S. tax purposes](#) [26], they are not eligible for the payment.

Why did I receive an economic stimulus payment? I am a nonresident for U.S. tax purposes. What should I do?

- **If you received the economic stimulus check in error, you [should follow these instructions](#) [27] 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.**
- Most likely, you received this payment because you incorrectly filed a **resident** tax form for 2018 or 2019 instead of a nonresident tax form. In that case, you should correct your error by filing an amended tax return. [Glacier Tax Prep](#) [28] software 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. All U-M Ann Arbor international students can use Glacier Tax Prep free of charge.
- If you filed a resident tax form in error, 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 designed for U.S. tax residents is TurboTax, but there are many others. **In the future, be sure to use [Glacier Tax Prep](#) [28], the software that the International Center licenses for you, since it will prepare the correct nonresident tax form for you.**

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Links

- [1] <mailto:icenter@umich.edu>
- [2] <https://campusblueprint.umich.edu>
- [3] <https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/faqs/#enhanced-social-distancing-header>
- [4] <https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/faqs#education>
- [5] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/fall-term-2020-faqs-new-students>
- [6] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/reduced-course-load>
- [7] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/address-notification-requirement>
- [8] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/sites/default/files/U-M_Student_Letter_07-27-2020.pdf
- [9] <https://hr.umich.edu/benefits-wellness/health-well-being/health-plans/gradcare>
- [10] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/health-insurance-and-covid-19-insurance-information-international-tudents-and-scholars>
- [11] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/healthins/hours>
- [12] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/node/1413>
- [13] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/from-other-countries.html>
- [14] https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/national-interest-exceptions-from-certain-travelers-from-the-schengen-area--k-and-ireland.html?fbclid=IwAR2HmTyrAwNcR3o8q3HPED77b_YtjnXuG8EgW8u92uNtwtwgQ8nYRGZwOQ
- [15] <https://www.nafsa.org/sites/default/files/media/document/CLP%20Bulletin-%20Coronavirus%20Guidance-%20Students%2020200724%20%28002%29.pdf>
- [16] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/phased-resumption-routine-visa-services.html>
- [17] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/travel-visa#reval>
- [18] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/News/visas-news/expansion-of-interview-waiver-eligibility.html>
- [19] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/opt>
- [20] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/travel-post-opt>
- [21] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/j1-students/academic-training>
- [22] <mailto:mi.fo.ann.arbor@ssa.gov>
- [23] https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1sURKHbWLF9BRK_L7KENpwWLTmUEXdABZkTkT6q0WTTk/edit#slide=id.p
- [24] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/tax>
- [25] <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payment-information-center#eligibility>
- [26] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/tax/laws-and-filing-requirements#purpose>
- [27] <https://www.irs.gov/coronavirus/economic-impact-payment-information-center#more>
- [28] <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/tax/tax-software>