

F-1 Visa International Student FAQ

Center for Global Study & Engagement (CGSE)

June 20, 2020

Classes begin on campus August 17th – Now what???

CGSE is working collaboratively with multiple departments across campus to address the unique needs of our returning International Students.

WE ARE AWARE THAT SOME OF YOU WILL NOT BE ABLE TO RETURN TO CAMPUS FOR THE FALL SEMESTER DUE TO TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, THE LACK OF AVAILABLE/AFFORDABLE FLIGHTS, YOUR INABILITY TO GET A NEW VISA, OR BECAUSE YOU CHOSE NOT TO FOR PERSONAL REASONS.

The questions below aim to address both the possibility of return or what it may mean if you don't or can't return this Fall.

Given that [President Ensign's message](#) was released only a few days ago, there are still many decisions yet to make, and the institution is working swiftly to address these issues so each of you can make an informed decision about your Fall plans. Some of these decisions will be released early next week, others will take longer. We are, however, attempting to communicate move-in dates by next week, as well as additional details about academic continuity.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MY IMMIGRATION STATUS?

USCIS/SEVP Guidance for Fall 2020 – COVID-19 Special Guidance

You are each intimately aware of the changes to the F-1 visa guidance released by the SEVP due to COVID-19. For example, accommodations were made with online learning permissions, emailing of I-20's, allowing certain students to remain in "active status" when normally they would have been terminated, etc. These short-term changes in guidance were an enormous help to you as the student, as well as us, the host institution and sponsor of your F-1 visa.

HOWEVER, that COVID-19 guidance only extended through the Spring 2020 semester, and eventually also the Summer 2020 terms. **This same guidance HAS NOT YET BEEN EXTENDED THROUGH THE FALL 2020 TERM.** Colleges and universities all over the country are anxiously awaiting the new guidance to be released, outlining for us additional/updated permissions due to COVID-19. We do not yet have the guidance for the Fall, and no one is telling us WHEN that guidance will be released. Until that time, MOST of your questions about your F-1 visas cannot be answered by our office.

We are so sorry if this is not the news you had hoped for, but we are unable to communicate news that has not yet been communicated to us. AS SOON AS we get word from USCIS and the SEVP, we will be sure to pass along that information.

WHAT IF I AM PLANNING/HOPING TO COME BACK TO CAMPUS?

When should I return to campus and/or When is the latest I can return to campus?

As the health and safety of our students and campus community are of utmost important, we are still working out the final details of when students will be able to return to campus and what safe move-in procedures will be. There will be more information going out to all students about this next week.

We know as international students you may face special challenges returning to campus within a usual timeframe and so we are also determining the LATEST date you would be able to arrive on campus and still participate in the semester.

What about my current I-20? My travel signature is over a year old.

Due to updated guidance from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), we are now permitted to email I-20's directly to our students. **If your travel signature is set to expire before your expected date of entry into the U.S. (more than 12 months old), please complete [this form](#) to request a new one.** One of our DSO's will issue you a new I-20, sign Page 1, give you a fresh travel signature on Page 2, and scan it back to your Dickinson email address in PDF format. You will then need to print the new I-20, sign and date Page 1 yourself, and you're all set!

If your travel signature has not expired, please do not request a new I-20 as this will save our already very busy staff much-needed time to assist you with more efficiency.

If you are already in the U.S. and not planning to leave the country before the August 17th start of classes, you do not need a new I-20. Your current one is still good.

My I-20 still lists August 31, 2020 as my Session Start Date, but we're starting on August 17th, so do I need a new I-20?

The short answer is: At this time, NO you do not need a new I-20 for this purpose.

Once classes have begun and we are past the drop/add period, our DSO's will spend the following three weeks registering you in SEVIS for the current semester (something we do each and every semester per your F-1 visa requirements). It is at THAT time we will note the new start date on your semester (August 17, 2020) and reprint each and every one of you a new I-20.

How early can I enter the U.S.?

You are permitted to enter 30 days before the current listed start date of your semester, which is *listed* as August 31st. Therefore, you are permitted to re-enter the U.S. as early as August 1, 2020.

Passport vs. Visa vs. I-20

For your arrival back to the U.S., you will still need a passport that is good for at least 6 months past your date of entry, an unexpired visa, and your current I-20. None of these requirements have changed due to COVID-19.

I have questions about Healthcare coverage

Here is a [link](#) on the Dickinson College website regarding your healthcare coverage. For further information please contact our insurance administrator: RCM&D, Tim Cummons at 1-800-346-4075 ext. 1452 or email: dickinson@rcmd.com.

How will Dickinson keep students healthy and safe during the semester?

More information will be going out to all students in the coming weeks about the guidelines, protocols, and procedure for student safety.

What if I come back to campus and can't/don't want to return home before the start of the spring semester? Can I stay on campus?

We understand there will be some students (international and domestic) unable to leave campus on November 20th when on-campus classes are scheduled to end. Although these details have not yet been determined, there will likely be a petition process to remain on campus. Please expect there to be fees associated with remaining on campus.

ADDITIONAL NOTE: In the event the Fall semester would be suspended part-way through, as happened in the Spring 2020, we would work with you to remain on campus if you were unable to leave.

WHAT IF I CAN'T OR DON'T WANT TO RETURN TO CAMPUS THIS FALL?

Below are possible options we are working on for your academic continuity. Final decisions can be made and communicated to you once we know what courses will be offered remotely – many will be. Once we also have updated immigration guidance from SEVP/USCIS (see “WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MY IMMIGRATION STATUS?” above):

- Completing all your course work remotely – stay tuned for more updates on what this might look like.
- Taking courses for the semester at a university in your home country and transferring credits back to Dickinson – we will have more guidance about this option next week (the week of 06/22/2020).
- If you are from China or Vietnam, we are creating ***Dickinson in China and Dickinson in Vietnam for international students*** programs that will allow you to do a semester in either Beijing or Ho Chi Minh City with a wide range of course options, co-curricular activities, onsite support, housing, etc. We will send more information to Chinese and Vietnamese students about these programs next week.
- Taking a leave of absence. Although not advisedly your first course of action, taking a Leave of Absence (LOA) is indeed an option for you as a student at Dickinson. If you would like additional information on the LOA process, please review [this link](#). Scroll down to “Status Changes.”

If you are considering an LOA and have specific questions, please reach out to Angie Harris, Associate Dean of Students, at harrisa@dickinson.edu.

OTHER QUESTIONS:

Applying for CPT (“work authorization” for internships and research experiences)

If you are still hoping to secure a last-minute internship or research experience this summer, Dean Fox at the Internship Notation Program and I are working closely to assist students with any last-minute registrations. Please note the initial deadline to register for summer internships was June 1, 2020, so your timeliness in communicating any needs for CPT approval at this point would be greatly appreciated.

Due to COVID-19, here is a brief summary of a student’s need to secure CPT approval for a summer 2020 internship:

1. If you are currently **outside** of the U.S. and plan to work for a company who is **not** a U.S.-based company, no CPT work authorization is needed.
2. If you are currently **outside** of the U.S. and plan to work for a company who **is** a U.S.-based company, CPT work authorization **is** required.
3. If you are currently **inside** the U.S., CPT work authorization **is** needed no matter where your company is based.

Remember, as an F-1 visa holder, the only work authorization you automatically have is *on-campus work for Dickinson College*. ANY other work, whether paid or unpaid, requires CPT authorization. At Dickinson College, the only way to secure CPT authorization is by registering your experience with the [INP](#) or [REXP](#).

IMPORTANT: You must have your I-20 with CPT authorization *in your hand* **before** beginning any work, paid or unpaid.

TAXES – DUE: July 15, 2020

The U.S. government has extended the deadline for submitting your tax paperwork from April 15th (our typical annual deadline) to July 15th. No matter where you are in the world at this time, you are still required to submit your tax paperwork, along with any potential amount due, ON TIME BY July 15, 2020.

I have already outlined for you in clear, step-by-step detail, all of the information you need to accurately file you Federal, State, *and* local taxes in emails from February 2020. Please review the following emails sent from Melodi’s account:

- Dated 02/10/2020 with Subject: Non-Resident TAXES - Information & Workshops - PLEASE READ!
- Dated 02/10/2020 with Subject: Non-Resident TAXES - Additional forms attached
- Dated 02/13/2020 with Subject: TAXES, TAXES, TAXES! A follow-up email...
- Dated 02/27/2020 with Subject: State & Local Taxes - More TAX Updates

If AFTER REVIEWING all of the above email communications, you still have questions about your taxes, please email Christine Hock in Global Finance at hockc@dickinson.edu. She is not a tax expert and is unable to give you any tax advice. However, she can answer basic questions about NRA taxes and the filing process.

THANK YOU!!! International Student Survey

Last weekend we asked you to participate in a brief survey. Your responses were incredibly helpful and will continue to be in the weeks ahead. If you did not take the opportunity to participate yet, it's not too late! [CLICK HERE to share your responses.](#)

Here at CGSE, we recognize the multi-faceted challenges you face in the midst of this global pandemic, and we cannot express enough how much we care about you as an international student. We are here, we are listening, and we are working diligently to advocate for you and your needs. Hopefully this document has been of assistance to you at this time, and we are already working on the next one as soon as information is shared with us both from the institution *and* from the SEVP.

NOTE: If you have sent an individual email to a staff member at CGSE, or to our main account at global@dickinson.edu, asking a question answered in this FAQ, please accept this FAQ as your email response. Thank you for your understanding.