



FAQs for UM F-1 Students, Spring 2021

12/10/2020

1. What is the SEVP Spring 2021 guidance?

As stated in the March 2020 guidance, Active F-1 students will be permitted to temporarily count online classes towards a full course of study. The March 2020 guidance applies to continuing F nonimmigrant students who were in valid F-1 nonimmigrant status on March 9, 2020. This includes students previously enrolled in entirely online classes who are outside of the United States and seeking to re-enter the country this Spring. Students actively enrolled at a U.S. school on March 9, 2020, who subsequently took courses online while outside of the country can re-enter the United States, even if they will engage solely in distance learning.

In accordance with March 2020 guidance, F-1 students in new or initial status after March 9, 2020, will not be able to enter the United States to enroll in a U.S. school as a nonimmigrant student for the Spring term to pursue a full course of study that is 100 % online. Also consistent with the SEVP Broadcast Message dated March 9, 2020, designated school officials should not issue a Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," for a student in new or initial status who is outside of the United States and plans to take classes at an SEVP-certified educational institution that is operating 100 % online.

2. If I am already in the U.S. and I am registered for an in-person course, how will I be affected?

For the Spring semester, you can choose to enroll in in-person, hybrid, or remote courses. You may stay in the U.S. and study remotely from anywhere in the U.S. and will continue to maintain your F-1 student status.

3. How many in-person classes do I need to enroll in if I will be in the U.S. in Spring?

If you are a new student, have a UM Form I-20 and an F-1 visa and are currently outside of the U.S., you will be able to enter the U.S. in F-1 status only if you enroll in at least one in-person class or a hybrid plan (a combination of online and in-person classes). New students are not allowed to enter the U.S. to pursue a full course of study that is 100 % online in the Spring.

If you are a continuing student, you are required to enroll full-time in courses that are required for your degree program. For the Spring semester, you can choose to enroll in in-person, hybrid, or remote courses. You may stay in the U.S. and study remotely from anywhere in the U.S. and will continue to maintain your SEVIS record in active status.

4. Can I only take courses that are in my approved program of study?

Per Immigration regulation, you will need to be enrolled full-time in classes that are required for your degree program and to make progress towards completion of your program in order to maintain valid F-1 status

If you are a new student who plans to study remotely from outside the U.S., you may enroll in any online course of your choice. You should discuss your course selection with your academic advisor.

5. Can I stay in the U.S. and take all my classes online?

If you are a continuing student currently in the U.S., you can choose to enroll in in-person, hybrid, or 100 % online courses. You may stay in the U.S. and study remotely from anywhere in the U.S. and continue to maintain your SEVIS record in active status.

6. I'm a transfer or change of educational level student. Can I continue to remain in the U.S. if I am engaged in a fully online program of study?

Yes, you may remain in the U.S. to engage in full course of study online if you have not otherwise violated the terms of your nonimmigrant status since March 9, 2020.

7. I am currently outside the U.S. and would like to take all my classes online. Can I do this?

Yes, you may register and take all your courses online from outside the U.S. if you prefer.

If you are a new student, you will be able to enter the U.S. in F-1 status only if you enroll for in-person classes or a hybrid plan (a combination of online and in-person classes). New students are not allowed to enter the U.S. to pursue a full course of study that is 100 % online in the Spring. An I-20 and F-1 status are not required to take online courses from outside the U.S.

New students who are unable to come to the U.S. this Spring and are enrolled in remote courses can request a Form I-20 with a deferred program start date for an arrival in the Summer or Fall 2021. Students can use their current or the updated I-20 to apply for the F-1 visa.

If you are a continuing UM student who maintained F status and you have an active SEVIS record, you can choose to enroll in in-person, hybrid, or remote courses. You may travel to the U.S. and study remotely from anywhere in the U.S. or abroad and will continue to maintain your SEVIS record in active status.

8. If I study online from my country, will this affect my F-1 status or visa?

If you are a new student currently abroad, an I-20 and F-1 status are not required to take online courses from outside the U.S. You will be issued an updated Form I-20 that reflects Summer or Fall 2021 as your program start date. You can use your current or the updated I-20 to apply for the F-1 visa. Not physically attending UM this Spring will not negatively affect their visa application if one was already submitted.

If you are a continuing UM student who maintained F status and you have an active SEVIS record, you can choose to enroll in in-person, hybrid, or remote courses. You may study remotely from abroad or anywhere in the U.S. and will continue to maintain your SEVIS record in active status. Your current F-1 visa will not be affected if you choose to study remotely.

9. If I am unable to come to the U.S. and choose to enroll in online classes, will this impact my future application for a student visa?

New students who are unable to come to the U.S. this Spring can request a Form I-20 with a deferred program start date for an arrival in Summer or Fall. Students can use their current or the updated I-20 to apply for the F-1 visa. Not physically attending UM this Spring will not negatively affect their visa application if one was already submitted.

10. What will happen to my F-1 benefits if I remain outside the U.S. and take all my classes online?

For new students, time spent studying remotely without F-1 status will not count towards their eligibility for [Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#) and [Optional Practical Training \(OPT\)](#).

For continuing students, time spent studying remotely during Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021 will count towards your eligibility for [Curricular Practical Training \(CPT\)](#) and [Optional Practical Training \(OPT\)](#). If Spring 2020 is your final semester, you are abroad, and you wish to apply for OPT, you must enter the U.S. before your program end date.

11. I am a new student and registered for a hybrid course that will only have some meetings in-person. Will that satisfy the SEVP requirement?

The Code of Federal Regulations provides a definition of online courses for F-1 students. This definition describes an online class as one that, "...does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class." [8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(6\)\(i\)\(G\)](#)

If your hybrid course requires physical attendance for classes, examinations, or other purposes integral to the completion of the class, it will satisfy the SEVP requirement. F-1 students in new or initial status after March 9, 2020, will not be able to enter the U.S. to enroll in a U.S. school as a nonimmigrant student for the Spring term to pursue a full course of study that is 100 % online.

12. Will independent study/dissertation/thesis/research/practicum credits be considered online courses?

The Code of Federal Regulations provides a definition of online courses for F-1 students. This definition describes an online class as one that, "...does not require the student's physical attendance for classes, examination or other purposes integral to completion of the class." [8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(6\)\(i\)\(G\)](#)

By this definition, required in-person meetings would preclude a course from being considered fully online. These courses should not be considered remote unless they are specifically designated as a remote offering in your class schedule in CaneLink.

Students should select the in-person mode of instruction for these courses if they plan to study on-campus. Students who plan to stay outside the U.S. for Spring should select the online mode.

13. Is one credit of dissertation credit enough for the “in person” requirements to be met?

In-person 800 level courses/research credits are considered full-time and on-campus enrollment for international students, as they have been in the past. These credits typically involve an in-person component such as lab access or meetings with the advisor. Students should select the in-person mode of instruction for these courses if they plan to study on-campus. Students who plan to stay outside the U.S. for Spring should select the online mode.

14. I’m a new student. I heard I need a new I-20 with a certification confirming that I am not taking online classes. How can I request an I-20 to confirm this?

UM will not be able to issue an Initial Form I-20 for any student who is outside of the U.S. and plans to take classes fully online. If you were issued a Form I-20 already, you may only use it to apply for an F-1 visa and travel to the U.S. to attend in-person or hybrid classes in the Spring. A certification confirming that you are not taking online classes is not needed.

15. I am a continuing student. If I choose to study online in Spring, do I need to get a new I-20?

As long as you are enrolled full-time and make normal progress in your course of study, you remain eligible to enter the U.S. in F-1 status before or during the Spring semester, or to arrive for the Fall semester, even if you will be taking classes fully online in the Spring. An updated I-20 is not required.

16. I have a J visa or a different non-immigrant visa. Does the SEVP guidance affect me?

No. SEVP guidance specifically addresses policies for students in the U.S. on F or M visa status only who will be enrolling in coursework in Spring 2021.

17. If UM goes completely online, would I be allowed to remain in the U.S.?

Yes, as long as you are enrolled full-time, you will still be in valid F-1 status, and your SEVIS record will remain active.

18. I left the U.S. in Summer 2020. Am I subject to the 5-month rule when I enter the U.S. for the Spring?

The five-month limit rule of temporary absence provision will not apply for students who remain in SEVIS-active status. If you are maintaining valid F-1 status and your current visa is unexpired, it will still be valid for entry to the U.S. after 5-months has passed. You will also be able to use your current Form I-20 (with a valid certification signature on page 2) and F-1 visa to enter the U.S. in F-1 status.

19. I am an admitted international student for the Spring semester. Will I be able to defer my admission if I cannot begin classes in January?

Undergraduate Admission and the graduate academic departments work with all newly admitted international students. Questions about deferring admission and obtaining your Form I-20 and an F-1 visa can be directed to [Undergraduate Admission](#) for First-year and transfer students or the [Graduate Programs](#) for Master's and PhD students.

20. If I choose to defer admission from the Spring 2021 semester to Fall 2021, how will that affect my F-1 visa status?

You will not have F-1 status if you are not in the U.S. To request that their admission be deferred to Fall 2021, undergraduate students should notify the [Undergraduate Admission](#) and graduate students should contact their [Graduate Programs](#) directly.

New students who are approved to defer admission to Fall 2021 will be issued a new I-20 with amended program dates after the Spring semester is underway.

21. What do I need to do if I choose to take a gap semester or leave of absence for Spring?

Continuing undergraduate students: If you decide you will not enroll at UM in Spring, you can apply for Inactive status with the Registrar's office for one semester. Information about Inactive status can be found on the Cane's Central website [here](#). If you have questions about Inactive status, including deadlines to apply, please contact canescentral@miami.edu. If you apply for Inactive status, ISSS will close your SEVIS record. To return, you will need to apply for a new I-20, pay a new SEVIS fee, and apply for a new visa outside the U.S. Full instructions for students returning after Inactive status can be found here: [Instructions For Undergraduate Students To Obtain A University Of Miami Form I-20 After Readmission Or Inactive Status](#).

Continuing graduate students: If you decide you will not enroll at UM in Spring, contact your academic department to notify them of your intent not to enroll for Spring. They will be able to advise you of the deadline to be approved for a leave, and if this decision affects your UM funding, if you receive any. If approved, notify ISSS. We will need to close your SEVIS record. To return, notify your [Graduate Program](#), and they will apply for a new I-20. Once you have received your I-20, you will need to pay a new SEVIS fee, and apply for a new visa outside the U.S.

22. What do I need to do if want to enroll part-time for Spring?

New international students outside the U.S. may study remotely part-time and don't need a Form I-20 or F-1 status to do so.

Continuing students outside of the U.S. may study remotely part-time and don't need F-1 status to do so. If you choose this option, your SEVIS record will be closed, and you may request an I-20 for a new SEVIS record and obtain a new F-1 visa to return to the U.S. to continue your studies in the Fall.

New and continuing international students in the U.S. are required to enroll full-time, unless they are eligible for an [exception to enroll full-time](#) and have obtained [authorization](#) from their academic advisor

and ISSS to enroll part-time in Spring. Otherwise, they will need to leave the U.S. before the start of the Spring semester.

23. Many students' on-campus employment opportunities are now being conducted remotely while campuses are closed or students are able to perform their work duties from home. Can F students engage in remote work for on-campus employment?

If the current on-campus employment opportunity has transitioned to remote work or the employment can be done through remote means, students may continue to engage in on-campus employment remotely. Schools should be able to explain how the students are providing services associated with the employment while not at the location of the employer.

24. I'm a PhD student with an assistantship. I worked on-campus as a tutor in Fall 2020, and now will teach for the same department. Can I work remotely in the Spring 2021?

Yes, you can continue working on your assistantship remotely.

25. I'm a new student and have an assistantship. Can I start working remotely?

New students may start on-campus employment remotely if they are in the U.S. and enrolled for hybrid or remote learning. Schools should be able to explain how the students are providing services associated with the employment while not at the location of the employer.

New students who are outside of the U.S. are not in F-1 or J-1 status should inquire with their on-campus employer if remote work from abroad is possible.