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# Answers to Questions from Current International Students Regarding Fall 2020 at the UMN

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## Dear Returning International Students and Scholars,

This document includes information for returning international students. We are working with departments across the University to develop plans that will give you the flexibility needed to ensure you can continue your studies at the University, whether that is here in Minnesota or online from your home country.

We will continue to update this document as information becomes available. We also encourage you to regularly read the emails sent to your UMN email from ISSS and other departments. Otherwise, click on the links below to read answers grouped by topic area:

- [General Questions](#)
- [SEVP Guideline Updates](#)
- [Taking Classes While Within the U.S.](#)
  - [Travel](#)
  - [Health Care](#)
- [Taking Classes Online While In Your Home Country](#)
  - [Visa Items](#)
- [Taking the Fall Semester Off with Plans to Return in Spring](#)
- [Misc. Immigration Items \(Visa & More\)](#)
- [Student Fees](#)
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  - [ISSS and Other Fees](#)
- [Housing](#)
- [Employment](#)
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### For More Information:

- [Safe Campus: Return to Campus](#)
- [Office of Undergraduate Education](#)
- [Graduate School](#)
- [Housing & Residential Life](#)

**Attention New Students Starting in the Summer/Fall:** This document is for students who have completed, at least, one semester at the University of Minnesota. Please review ISSS's [information for new students](#).

## General Questions

### ***Q. What is the University's plan for the fall?***

The Board of Regents has approved a framework for resuming in-person instruction and reopening residence halls and campus services this fall in ways that are consistent with public health guidance and provide flexibility for students, staff, and faculty. Courses will be offered in a variety of options, including in-person, fully distanced, hybrid, "HyFlex," and others. Please review [the message](#) sent by President Joan Gabel for more information about these plans.

### ***Q. How can I be informed about changes and updates?***

ISSS and other offices across campus will provide further updates as these plans are announced. To ensure you receive these updates, make sure to check your UMN email regularly and read the ISSS Weekly Update sent at the beginning of the week. This is the UMN's primary way to contact you. We will also continue to update this Frequently Asked Questions document.

## SEVP Guideline Updates

### ***Q. What do I need to know as a current University of Minnesota student about the new SEVP guideline released on July 24 regarding online courses?***

**For current students currently in the United States:** The guidance clarified that those who are currently in the U.S. can stay in the United States while taking 100% of their courses online.

**For current students currently outside of the United States:** The guidance clarified that students outside of the United States must enroll in a full course load to keep their SEVIS record active (this means that you are eligible to maintain your F-1 status with a full time courseload).

## For Those Taking Classes While Within the U.S.

### ***Q. Can I remain in the United States if I am in a fully online program?***

Yes. Students enrolled in a fully online only program may remain in the United States. This permission would apply to students who are changing to a program that is 100% online in fall 2020 as long as they were in the United States during the Spring 2020 term.

### ***Q. Will I be allowed to remain in the United States if the University of Minnesota switches from hybrid instruction to fully online instruction?***

Yes. The new guidance clarifies that students will be allowed to stay in the United States for Fall 2020 even if their University switches to fully online instruction.

**Q. *I'm a continuing student planning to return to campus from abroad to resume my studies this fall. Will I be allowed to enter the USA?***

It depends. Due to the COVID pandemic, the U.S. government has imposed travel restrictions on [certain countries](#) and therefore international students coming from one of these countries (while the restrictions are in place) are ineligible for admission into the USA. As the fall semester approaches, it is possible that these restrictions may change. As you make your fall plans please continue to check the [Center for Disease Control website](#) and the [Department of State website](#) for travel updates.

Due to the possible impact of these travel restrictions and consulate closures, we highly recommend to students who are currently outside of the U.S. to be realistic about the risks and their ability to enter the U.S. for study in Fall 2020. Continue to work with your academic advisers to ensure you have the option to take your classes remotely, from your home country.

**Q. *Can I remain in the United States if I am in a fully online program?***

Yes. Students enrolled in a fully online only program may remain in the United States. This permission would apply to students who are changing to a program that is 100% online in fall 2020 as long as they were in the United States during the Spring 2020 term.

## Travel Items

**Q. *Is the UMN requiring individuals to quarantine after arriving at the UMN?***

On Friday, August 7, the U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC) lifted the 14 day quarantine for international travelers. International students who are coming the UMN from countries outside of the United States DO NOT need to quarantine for two weeks when they arrive. For more information, see the CDC website for [Tips for After You Travel](#). Students living in residence halls should review the [Maroon & Gold Sunrise Plan](#).

**Q. *How can students prove to a visa official or an immigration officer that they are enrolled in courses that are not 100% online?***

There has not been an official announcement stating what documents visa officials or immigration officers may ask to see regarding a student's enrollment in online classes. Based on the systems used at the University of Minnesota, we recommend you do the following:

**If you have registered for classes:**

1. Go to the [Academics tab](#) of MyU.
2. Click on registration and then the button to register for classes (it states "Register (Shopping Cart)")
3. Select Fall 2020 and click "Continue".
4. You will then be shown a list of your courses.
5. Take a screenshot of your classes (the [directions for how to do this](#) varies by computer)
6. Print out your screenshot and [this PDF](#).

Bring both documents with you to the embassy and when you go through the immigration inspection process when you enter the U.S. These documents are not required but could be helpful if you are asked questions about your courses.

**If you have not registered for classes:**

Undergraduate students who are not registered can bring a copy of their orientation schedule (new undergraduate freshman students or new undergraduate transfer students) which indicates they are required to register when they attend orientation.

**Q. *The U.S. has issued travel restrictions for my country. Can I return to the U.S. by traveling through another country?***

Yes, however, if you are in a country where the U.S. has restricted travel, you will need to spend 14 days in a 3rd country before entering the U.S. You should check with that country to ensure you meet their travel and visa requirements before making travel arrangements.

**Q. *If the current travel restrictions from China remain, will students need to arrive through a third country and remain there for 14 days?***

Yes, if you are traveling from China, at this time students will need to spend 14 days in a country where the U.S. has not imposed travel restrictions prior to entering the U.S.

**Q. *What is the latest date that I can arrive at UMN and still attend for Fall 2020?***

If you will be delayed, email your academic adviser or department as soon as you are aware of the delay. They can share specific information about your program and discuss what you need to do.

**Q. *What guidance can you provide about traveling outside the U.S. during the Thanksgiving or Christmas Break?***

After Thanksgiving, many courses will only have online requirements remaining. Check with your course instructor if you have questions about your course. Students who want to go home may do so, but it's hard to predict now what world conditions will be like as they relate to COVID-19. When it gets closer to that time, we recommend checking on travel restrictions, flight availability, visa appointment availability, etc.

## Health Care

[See the Student Fees section for information about the Health Insurance Fee](#)

**Q. *Does the student health insurance cover me if I were to get sick?***

Yes, please review the [Office of Student Health Benefits website](#) for more information about the Student Health Benefit Plan or the Graduate Assistant Health Plan. You can also email [umshbo@umn.edu](mailto:umshbo@umn.edu) if you have additional questions about your insurance plan.

# For Those Taking Classes Online While In Your Home Country

**Q. Do I need to update my address in MyU if I will be studying from my home country?**

If you are a continuing/returning student who is living outside of the U.S. for Fall 2020 and you do not have a current address in the United States, you may enter the address of a friend or family member who could receive university mail on your behalf while you are away. If this is not an option for you, you may enter the ISSS address (301 19th Ave. South, 190 Hubert H. Humphrey School, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455).

**Do not enter a foreign address as your mailing address into MyU.** A current U.S. address is required in order to keep your SEVIS record Active. For more information, including instructions for updating your MyU record, go to [z.umn.edu/issaddress](https://z.umn.edu/issaddress).

**Q. I have applied to graduate this fall. Can I take all my remaining classes and exams online and graduate as scheduled at the end of the fall term?**

You should consult with your academic adviser to determine if the classes you need to meet your graduation requirements will be offered in an online format. Regarding the implications for your immigration status, international students are allowed to take classes remotely within and outside of the USA.

## Visa Items

**Q. If the situation makes it unfavorable to be in the United States (either because of safety concerns or flight issues), am I allowed to take online classes from my country instead?**

Yes. International students can enroll in online classes during the fall and complete them from their home countries. F-1 & J-1 students will be able to maintain their immigration (visa) status for Fall 2020 as long as they register for a full course load, regardless of whether these courses are in-person or via remote learning.

**Q. Will my visa be canceled if I am studying from my home country?**

If you have an F-1 visa, your visa (stamp in passport) will not be canceled if you are studying full-time from your home country.

**Q. Does studying while outside of the United States during the COVID-19 emergency count affect when I can apply for CPT/OPT/AT?**

- **F-1 students** accrue eligibility for practical training whether they are inside or outside of the United States during the COVID-19 emergency if the student is in Active status in SEVIS.
- **J-1 students** are allowed to participate in academic training for 18 months or for the period of time as a full time student in the United States, whichever is less.

## For Those Wishing to Take the Fall Semester Off with Plans to Return in Spring

**Q. *Am I allowed to take the fall semester off if I plan to enroll in the spring? What will happen with my SEVIS record?***

You need to consult your academic advisor and ISSS about the request for a Leave of Absence if you decide to take the fall semester off.

ISSS is required to terminate a student's SEVIS record if they do not enroll in a particular semester. If your SEVIS record is terminated, then before returning in the spring, you will need to contact ISSS ([iss@umn.edu](mailto:iss@umn.edu)) to reinitiate your SEVIS record and request an updated travel I-20/DS-2019. We request you contact ISSS three months before your planned arrival to allow processing time.

**Note:** You should be aware that due to your SEVIS record being canceled, you will not be eligible to apply for OPT/CPT until you have completed 2 full-time semesters (for example, spring and summer or spring and fall).

## Misc. Immigration Items (Visa & More)

**Q. *My passport and visa will expire before I am expected to graduate. What should I do?***

Contact your embassy or consulate for instructions about renewing your passport. Students should have a valid passport at all times. It is best to start the process early since there may be process delays.

You only need to have a valid visa when you wish to re-enter the United States as it is your entry permit. Once you enter the country it's ok if it expires. You must ensure your I-20/DS-2019 are up-to-date at all times while you are in the United States..

**Q. *If I am a current student who is outside the U.S. and needing a visa renewed, am I eligible for a visa if I am taking 100% online?***

Yes. The updated guidance on July 24 includes a statement that supports this situation.

**Q. *Can you send me an electronic copy of my I-20 or DS-2019?***

**I-20:** ISSS has begun issuing electronic I-20s for students requesting Travel I-20s, CPT, program extensions, updates to their majors, and other items. ISSS must ship a paper I-20 for students applying to OPT and STEM OPT.

**DS-2019:** We can send an unsigned, digital copy of the document for information and visa scheduling purposes. The digital copy cannot be used during the visa interview or to enter the United States. You will need to receive the signed, original DS-2019 in the mail before your visa interview.

**Q. *Can I apply for a visa to enter the US for a hybrid program?***

Yes, students enrolling in a program that includes in-person and online components are eligible to apply for an F-1 visa.

## Student Fees

### Health Insurance

**Q. *Am I required to have health insurance if I am studying within the United States and enrolled at the University of Minnesota?***

Yes, all students who are in the United States and enrolled at the University of Minnesota are required to have the Student Health Benefit Plan unless they are eligible for a waiver. This requirement applies regardless of how your courses are being delivered (in-person, online, or hyflex). For more information, go to [www.shb.umn.edu](http://www.shb.umn.edu).

**Q. *I am studying online from my home country in fall 2020. How do I ensure that I am not being charged for the University Health Insurance?***

By October 1, you must submit the International Waiver Request Form to waive the Student Health Benefit Plan by October 1st. To do this, you must submit the form along with documentation showing that you are residing in your home country to the Student Health Benefits office. If you are residing outside the U.S. in a third country that is not your country of citizenship, please contact [umshbo@umn.edu](mailto:umshbo@umn.edu).

Below are options for the documentation you can provide. Please contact ISSS if you need additional help in understanding this requirement.

- Copy of your flight ticket/itinerary showing your departure from the United States,
- The electronic I-94 travel history if it shows your most recent departure (this can be accessed here),
- A copy of your passport showing a stamped entry date into your home country, or
- A letter or email from your academic advisor (undergraduate) or Graduate Program Coordinator (graduate students) that states you are studying from your home country.

Once you have submitted your waiver and document copy, your fees on your MyU account will be updated. Please be aware, however, that it may take up to 2 weeks for your account to be updated due to the high volume of requests.

**Q. *I have reported my plans, but my account still shows the health insurance balance, what are my next steps?***

If you have reported your plans and your account is not updated by September 20, 2020, please contact the Office of Student Health Benefits at [umshbo@umn.edu](mailto:umshbo@umn.edu). There may be a delay in processing waivers.

## ISSS and Other Fees

**Q. *Do I still need to pay the ISSS fees if I'm not on the Twin Cities campus this fall or if I'm taking all my classes online?***

Yes, international students will continue to pay ISSS fees. In a thorough review of student fees, the Board of Regents decided all international students will be required to pay the International Student Support Services Fee and International Student Engagement Fee this fall regardless of whether they are taking their courses in-person or online this fall. These fees directly support all International students through programs and services provided by International Student and Scholar Services.

The International Student Support Services Fee of \$175.00 supports our services for F-1 and J-1 students, including immigration advising, counseling, programming, and advocacy. ISSS advisers remain available to communicate with international students about their visa-related questions and other issues related to transitioning to instruction at the University of Minnesota. The International Student Engagement fee of \$14.00 supports key student programs that continue to be offered virtually this fall.

**Q. *Do I need to pay other student service fees?***

Your bill for the term will include the fees that apply to your specific course registration. Tuition and fees support the variety of services our students rely on for their educational and student life success, and these wide-ranging resources and services continue to be available in a variety of existing and new formats.

In response to COVID-19, many Student Services Fee-funded services have been enhanced to ensure that units are still able to serve students regardless of physical location (online workout programs, remote access to legal services, etc.). The physical location of the student or the service unit is no longer a significant factor in the delivery of many services. You should review the [One Stop website](#) and/or [contact One Stop](#) if you have questions about your student fees.

## Housing

**Q. *I have questions about living on-campus. Who should I contact?***

For questions about on-campus housing, please review the [Housing and Residential Life website](#) for more information.

**Q. *If the fall term ends the week of Thanksgiving, can I shorten my housing contract?***

If you will be living in on-campus housing, please review the [Housing and Residential Life website](#) for more information.

For questions about living off-campus, please review the [Off-Campus Living Office webpage](#). You will need to contact your landlord or apartment manager directly. [Student Legal Services](#) can also provide assistance with leases.

**Q. Will I be able to live on-campus over Winter Break?**

Yes. Housing and Residential Life will continue to have on-campus housing over University breaks for students living on campus. Watch for communications from their office to learn more about options available to you or email [housing@umn.edu](mailto:housing@umn.edu) with your break housing requests.

**Q. If I have already signed a lease to live off-campus but will not be taking classes on-campus in the fall, what can I do?**

More likely than not, you have a legally binding contract, so you will likely need to find somebody else to take over the lease. You should contact your landlord or apartment manager directly to see if they would be willing to let you out of the lease early. [Student Legal Services](#) can also provide assistance with reviewing the language in your lease and provide ideas about ways to negotiate.

## Employment

**Q. Is it possible for me to have a job as an international student and work outside the U.S.?**

Many students will be able to be hired and continue/start new jobs while being outside the U.S. during the fall semester.

- **Graduate and professional degree students** should contact their academic department where they can assist in the next steps to determine if you are eligible for employment.
- **Undergraduate students**, for on-going employment, should contact their previous supervisor to learn about their options. For those starting for new positions, you should ask the department if you can work remotely from another country when you are applying for the position.

**Q. As a student, can I complete my I-9 Form to start employment?**

The UMN Office of Human Resources is processing I-9 verifications remotely for foreign national employees. To submit the necessary paperwork, new employees should compile and complete their documents (review [OHR's website](#) to identify the appropriate documents) and then email them to [I9OHR@umn.edu](mailto:I9OHR@umn.edu). It is important all of the forms are completed as incomplete forms and missing visa documents will delay processing.

All new UMN employees must submit their I-9 forms **on or before their first day of employment**, so the forms should be submitted as soon as possible. The OHR Contact Center is only able to process documents Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m to 3:00 p.m. If documents are sent in on a weekend and the start date is the following Monday, the process will most likely not be completed in time.

The OHR Contact Center can help with any questions about the forms and documents. Call 4-UOHR (+1-612-624-8647) and select Option 2.

**Q. I am about to start a job. Can I get a Social Security Number (SSN)?**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is closed to drop-in applications due to COVID-19. The office [is now offering appointments](#) to those who need to apply for a Social Security Number (SSN).

If you wish, you can wait to apply for a Social Security Number. USCIS documentation confirms that F-1 students, J-1 students/scholars, and others do not need an SSN to properly complete an I-9 form). You will need to work with your employer's Human Resource (HR) department to complete the I-9 form without a Social Security Number. You will need an SSN to qualify for any applicable tax-treaty benefits that exist with your country along with other U.S. tax requirements.

Alternatively, if you plan to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT), you have the option to apply for one when completing the I-765 form.

## **Other Questions**

**Q. *Can we get a COVID-19 test through Boynton Health Service if my country requires testing for Covid-19 and having negative results within 5 days of boarding a return flight?***

Students, staff or faculty requiring a negative COVID-19 test for international travel are able to be tested through Boynton Health Services. Schedule an appointment for testing in advance by, call 612-625-3222.