

## Frequently Asked Questions for International Students Fall 2020

Updated August 25, 2020

- **NEW: If I am a continuing student, studying in the U.S. in the fall 2020 semester, am I required to have face-to-face courses?**
  - Continuing students may choose to take a fully online course load, regardless of their physical location.
- **NEW: If I am a new student, studying in the U.S. in the fall 2020 semester, am I required to have face-to-face courses?**
  - If you are a new student, arriving in the U.S. for the first time, you'll be required to take at least one face-to-face or hybrid course, but the rest may be taken online.
- **Do I need to maintain and pay for University health insurance if I do not come to the U.S.?**
  - You do not need to maintain health insurance if you are studying outside of the U.S. To request a waiver for health insurance, you must complete [a waiver request form](#) no later than September 7, 2020.
- **If I am a new student studying outside of the U.S. in the fall 2020 semester, will I be able to study in New York in the spring 2021 semester?**
  - When you are ready to begin study in the U.S., you must obtain an F-1/J-1 student visa prior to entry. Visas are issued by the U.S. Department of State, and unfortunately, there is never a guarantee that a visa will be issued; the decision lies entirely with federal officials.
- **Are there any visa/regulatory consequences to remaining at home and taking online classes this fall?**
  - Continuing students must continue to take classes full-time online from home in order to maintain their visa status. If you are in your final semester and you do not require a full-time course load to complete degree requirements, you can enroll part-time and maintain status.
  - Students who are new to St. John's and do not already have an F-1 visa (from attending another U.S. school, for example) cannot apply for or receive an F-1 visa if they remain at home and study online during the fall semester.
- **If I am studying outside the U.S., do I continue to accumulate credit towards OPT eligibility?**
  - Continuing students who remain enrolled full-time and are in Active status in SEVIS will continue to continue to accumulate credit towards OPT eligibility, regardless of their physical location.
- **I need to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Can I do this remotely from outside of the United States?**
  - Unfortunately, F-1 regulations require you to be physically in the U.S. at the time you submit your OPT application. For more information on submitting your OPT application, please visit our page on our [Optional Practical Training page](#).
- **If I'm arriving from abroad, do I have to quarantine upon arrival to New York?**

- Though guidance is subject to change, if you are arriving from many [U.S. states](#) or [from abroad](#), you must complete a mandatory 14-day quarantine prior to arriving on campus. Please note that these quarantines apply to both students living in University housing **and** those living off-campus. For more information on quarantine options and requirements, please visit the Office of Residence Life's "[Move-In Survival Guide](#)." Review the section on "Quarantine Requirements.")
- Students quarantining off-campus will be required to present a negative COVID test (type: PCR, taken at the end of the 14-day period) to Student Health Services in order to enter campus. Students quarantining off-campus who need to take a PCR COVID test may visit the [NYS Department of Health's COVID Testing Site Locator](#) to find out where testing is available. The cost of this test should be covered by SJU Health Insurance.
- **What's the latest date I can check-in to housing?**
  - Saturday, August 29 is the last date to check in to Residence Halls. Unless you have requested to quarantine on campus and plan to arrive on August 1, all quarantine requirements need to be completed in advance of check-in. For more information, please visit the Office of Residence Life's "[Move-In Survival Guide](#)."
- **Can I continue "on campus" employment from abroad this fall? Does it have to be a job I'm continuing, or can it be a new job?**
  - Students can have "on campus" employment this fall from abroad, whether this is a continuation of a spring job or a new job for fall. This includes graduate assistantships; however, you must speak with your academic department about your plans.
- **Will academic scholarships be affected if I study from my home country?**
  - Merit-based scholarships will be honored, regardless of physical location or mode of instruction.
- **How about scholarships that require in-person engagement, like Ozanam and Catholic Scholars programs, or financial assistance tied to Athletics?**
  - Ozanam and Catholic Scholars will be accommodated if they need to participate remotely and should be in touch directly with their programs about this.
  - In addition, athletes should be in touch directly with their coaches for specific guidance.
- **How does the [5-month rule](#) affect students who were studying outside of the U.S. during the spring 2020 term?**
  - Based on current guidance, continuing students studying full-time outside the U.S. in spring 2020 and fall 2020 remain in Active status in SEVIS, and therefore the 5-month rule will not apply.
- **Will new I-20s be issued and sent to international students?**
  - Students will receive new I-20s on an as-needed basis. Students with upcoming visa appointments or planned travel should contact [iss@stjohns.edu](mailto:iss@stjohns.edu) for guidance.
- **How do the Department of State's July 16 guidance on national interest exceptions affect students from the Schengen area, the U.K., and Ireland?**

- The Department of State updated national interest exceptions for certain travelers from the Schengen Area, the U.K., and Ireland on July 16, 2020. Students traveling from these regions and countries with valid F-1 visas may be able to enter the U.S. We urge you to contact your local U.S. embassy or consulate for confirmation. Should you travel to the U.S., [print this page](#) and carry it with you when traveling.
- **If I move from my current on or off-campus residence to a new address, do I need to report it within 10 days?**
  - You need to report a change of your U.S. residential address in [UIS](#) (under the “personal information” tab) so we can update your SEVIS record as required by the Department of Homeland Security.
- **What happens if fully in-person classes resume in the spring and I remain outside of the United States?**
  - If we return to in-person instruction in the spring 2021 semester, you will need to attend classes on campus to maintain your F-1 status. We have outlined potential scenarios below:
    - Your visa and I-20 have not yet expired (i.e., they are still valid).
      - If you have a current travel signature, you can reenter the country (check on page 2 of your I-20. The signature must be no more than 12 months old upon arrival to the U.S.)
        - If you do not have a valid travel signature, you will need to email [iss@stjohns.edu](mailto:iss@stjohns.edu) with a request for an updated I-20 with travel signature, which will be mailed to you at home. In your email, be sure to include your:
          - Name
          - X-number
          - Home mailing address
          - Home phone number
          - Please also enter the additional information needed via the [Travel Checklist](#) on the “Request a Travel Signature” link.
    - Your visa has expired but your I-20 is current.
      - In this case, you will need to obtain a new visa at a US consulate or embassy before you can reenter the United States. US consulates and embassies in many countries remain closed at this time; however, emergency appointments may be available if necessary.
    - Your visa and I-20 have expired.
      - You will need to [contact ISSSO](#) to receive a new I-20 (view and download the [I-20 application](#)). Once your new I-20 has been issued, you will need to obtain a new visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy before you can reenter the United States.

- **What should I do if I have questions that are not answered here?**

We encourage you to contact the International Student and Scholar Services Office (ISSSO) at [iss@stjohns.edu](mailto:iss@stjohns.edu) for more information or [schedule an appointment](#) for individual advising. Please note that appointments will take place online.