



COVID-19 Information for NSU F-1 International Students #3

May 20, 2020

AGENDA



- **OIA Operations**
- **Winter & Summer Recap**
- **Fall**
- **Travel**
- **Current I-20 Concerns**
- **OPT**
- **Taxes**
- **CARES Act**
- **Unemployment**
- **Social Security Numbers**
- **Presidential Proclamation**
- **Economic Hardship**
- **Reminders**
- **Q&A**

DISCLAIMER



- **The Office of International Affairs (OIA) is able to provide general guidance. Any advice provided by OIA, including the information in this presentation, should not be construed as legal advice.**
- **Due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, DHS, USCIS, SEVP and other governmental agencies may change their interpretations of these immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits, at any time. OIA is committed to providing advice based on the most current guidance.**
- **Each case is fact-specific and it is advised that students contact an experienced immigration attorney with questions regarding individual situations.**

DISCLAIMER – COVID-19

- **This situation is entirely unprecedented at NSU, within the United States, and within our modern world.**
- **University officials may only present factual statements based on existing knowledge. We may not provide information to students that relies on anticipations, guesses, wishes, or other uncertainties.**
- **NSU and all DSOs are legally bound to fulfill SEVIS reporting requirements, respond to governmental directives, and adhere to the F-1 regulations.**
- **NSU will continue to prioritize the best interests of all NSU students – including F-1 international students – in decision-making related to COVID-19 and beyond.**

OIA OPERATIONS



- Fully remote staff
- Email: intl@nova.edu
 - Includes document processing
- Phone: (954) 262-7240
- Advising by Zoom:
 - Monday-Friday: 10am-12pm & 2pm-4pm
 - <http://bit.ly/nsuoissadvising> (or from nova.edu/internationalaffairs)

WINTER & SUMMER 2020

SEVP 3/12/20 Statement

“SEVP is committed to remaining flexible in allowing schools to make temporary procedural adaptations so nonimmigrant students can continue to make normal forward progress in their program of study. They can temporarily engage in distance-learning, either from within the U.S. or outside the country, in light of COVID-19.”

FALL 2020



NSU's 5/1/20 Announcement:

NSU will resume in-person classes for the fall 2020 term at all campuses, subject to the Governor of Florida's executive orders at the time of opening, as well as CDC and local government directives.

Courses will also be offered via synchronous online delivery.

FALL 2020



Students unable/unwilling to return to campus to enroll in in-person coursework:

Per SEVP, “Once a school returns to normal operations, if students cannot or choose not to return to the United States to study, DSOs should terminate the records.”

FALL 2020

Termination Implications – Program Start Date:

- **I-20s are created with actual term program dates so if you are terminated for failure to return in the fall, earliest I-20 program start date would be January (unless your program has 8-week terms).**
- **NSU will adjust procedures pending SEVP guidance**

FALL 2020

Termination Implications – New I-20:

- **To obtain a new I-20 you will require updated proof of finances.**
- **New I-20 requests should be submitted at least one month prior to “program start date” (term when you will re-enter).**

FALL 2020

Termination Implications – OPT:

- **Federal regulations require one academic year of enrollment in a valid immigration status prior to applying for OPT.**
- **Students terminated for the fall term and are graduating prior to Fall 2021 will be ineligible to apply for OPT.**

FALL 2020

Students required to complete a quarantine period in the U.S. following international travel:

- **Subject to CDC recommendations at time of arrival in the U.S.**
- **Early on-campus housing check-in not permitted but synchronous online course delivery will enable students to complete coursework while completing quarantine.**
- **Students with in person requirements (rotations, etc.) should communicate with their academic programs about possible quarantine period.**

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS



- A reminder of the required documents to re-enter the country:
 - Valid, unexpired passport
 - Valid, unexpired visa
 - Valid, unexpired I-20 with a valid travel signature

VISA CONCERNS



- **Students who leave the country will need a valid F-1 visa to return.**
- **3/20: All routine visa services temporarily suspended.**
- **3/27: Dept of State indicates in webinar that there is no known date for visa appointments to resume.**
- **Currently, some consular offices showing approximate wait times; most indicating “temporarily closed.”**

TRAVEL SIGNATURES



- Travel signatures validity:
 - Students: 12 months
 - On OPT: 6 months
- Request a travel signature by emailing intl@nova.edu at least seven business days prior to travel.
- Electronic I-20 with digital DSO signatures will be emailed.

Electronic Signatures on I-20s

- **DSOs may sign I-20s using digital signatures.**
- **DSOs may send I-20s electronically.**
- **U.S. Dept of State (agency issuing visas) and CBP (agents at ports of entry) are “in support of this action”.**
- **Electronic signatures valid until the need for a new signature.**

I-20 CONCERNS

- **Notify us if your CPT will end so that we may update your record. We can always re-authorize for new dates, if necessary.**
- **Ensure your I-20 will not expire prior to your return! If your I-20 will expire in the next few months and you will not finish your program, apply for a program extension now!**

I-20 CONCERNS



- **F-1 students are required to still update their address.**
- **All students required to complete COVID-19 Updates for F-1 Students Form:
bit.ly/nsuf1covid19updates**
 - **Also use this form to report further address changes.**

OPT

• FAQ for SEVP Stakeholders about COVID-19:

- *“DHS is evaluating [OPT] issues and may issue additional guidance. USCIS adjudicates OPT employment authorization and status requests for F and M students and has yet to issue official guidance on these issues.”*

OPT APPLICATIONS



- **Zero guidance has been provided regarding:**
 - **Students currently on OPT**
 - **If OPT applications will be accepted from outside of the US**
 - **If students attempting to re-enter the country with a pending or approved OPT will be permitted entrance without job offer.**

OPT APPLICATIONS



- **Our current recommendations are:**
 - **Students who wish to apply for OPT should do so from within the US and should remain in the US until:**
 - **OPT has been approved**
 - **EAD card has been received**
 - **Proof of employment can be provided**

OPT APPLICATIONS



- **Students who wish to apply for OPT should:**
 - **Review an OPT workshop recording (available at nova.edu/internationalaffairs/covid19)**
- **Send fully completed NSU OPT Application and fully completed I-765 to intl@nova.edu.**
- **Processing time for all documents: 7 business days.**

OPT APPLICATIONS



- Students may anticipate that OPT processing by USCIS will be delayed.
- Students do not need to send copies of other documents (photos, check, etc.) to intl@nova.edu for processing.
- Electronic OPT I-20s will be emailed to the student, who will be responsible for submitting all items to USCIS.

CURRENT OPT STUDENTS



- **Difference between layoffs & furloughs**
- **Furloughs = remaining with company = continued employment (doesn't count toward 90/150 days)**
- **Due to COVID-19, you are able to drop below 20 hours a week and still be considered employed.**

UNABLE TO DEPART THE U.S.



- **End of Grace Period**
- **Exceeding 90/150 OPT Unemployment Limits**

File a I-539 Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status to B-2 (visitor) prior to falling out of status.

OIA cannot assist with these petitions.

TAXES

- All F-1 students who were physically present in the U.S. during 2019 are required to file taxes.
 - If you did not work and did not receive a scholarship that was for something other than tuition, you will likely only have to file Form 8843. Very fast.
 - Tax filing deadline moved to 7/15/20.
 - Use Glacier Tax Prep to file your taxes.

CARES ACT STIMULUS



- **CARES Act credits are only for Resident Aliens (RAs). This is a tax designation, not an immigration designation. The vast majority of F-1 students are Non-Resident Aliens (NRAs) for tax purposes.**

CARES ACT STIMULUS



- **If a Non-Resident Alien incorrectly filed their tax return using the form 1040 or 1040-EZ instead of the 1040NR or 1040NR-EZ, they may have been incorrectly issued a CARES Act stimulus check.**
- **This error should not have happened if a student utilizes NSU's Glacier Tax Prep software.**

CARES ACT STIMULUS



- **If you are a Non-Resident Alien, like the vast majority of F-1 students, and you have incorrectly received a CARES Act stimulus check:**
 - **Do not spend the payment**
 - **Return the payment**
 - **May be subject to interest accrued until payment is returned.**

UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS



- **Vary state-by-state.**
- **Presumably F-1 students with valid issued EADs would be considered work-eligible by DHS and thus may qualify by the state for unemployment.**
- **OIA is unable to provide further information – we recommend seeking advice of experienced immigration attorney.**

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

- **Students needing SSN due to OPT can apply within OPT application – no delay.**
- **As of March 18, 2020, all SSA offices are closed and not providing in-person services.**
- **Students may be able to apply for emergency appointment or by mail – will need to inquire directly with SSA.**

4/22/20 Presidential Proclamation

- **Does not currently have any impact on non-immigrant visa categories, including F-1 students.**

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

- **The regulations allow for F-1 students who have experienced unforeseen circumstances beyond their control to apply for economic hardship which allows for off-campus employment.**
- **Eligibility:**
 - **Must have been in F-1 status for at least one academic year.**
 - **Must provide documentation of your economic hardship.**

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP



- **Application Process:**
 - **\$410 filing fee (even if denied)**
 - **Fee waiver requests are available but are almost never approved**
 - **Approximately three month USCIS processing time**
 - **If approved, limited to 20hrs during classes, full-time during university breaks.**

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

- **Notes:**

- **USCIS has been increasingly strict in their review of economic hardship applications.**
 - **Student cannot claim COVID-19 alone as a reason to file.**
- **Currently no examples of successful or unsuccessful COVID-19-related petitions.**
- **Please consider the U.S. job market you will enter, if approved.**

Q&A



REMINDERS

- **Set up multi-factor authorization using the Authenticator app to prevent interruptions to access for NSU email, Canvas, and other SharkLink**
- <https://www.nova.edu/oit/office-365/help/multi-factor-authentication.html>

REMINDERS

- **Sign up for NSU Alerts**
- <https://www.nova.edu/emergency/notification/registration-process.html>.
- **Official method of communication with students is via NSU email address!**

THANK YOU

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