



SEVIS (<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/>)



## The Accreditation of English Language Training Programs Act

### Overview

Nonimmigrant students attending an English Language training program of study (ESL programs) should take note that a new law has taken effect. In accordance with the Accreditation of English Language Training Programs Act (Accreditation Act), all ESL programs of study certified by the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) must be accredited, or have applied for accreditation before Dec. 15, 2011, by a regional or national accrediting agency that is currently recognized by the Department of Education.

In accordance with the Accreditation Act, SEVP is examining two types of English Language training programs of study for compliance with the Accreditation Act. The first are stand-alone programs and the second are combined programs of study, which are programs of study affiliated with another SEVP-certified institution either through a contract or incorporated into the institution's offered curriculum.

### Stand-alone English Language training programs of study

SEVP is currently issuing Notices of Intent to Withdraw to stand-alone English Language training programs of study not in compliance with the Accreditation Act. A Notice of Intent to Withdraw is an official notification to the English Language training program that it must submit evidence, within 30 days of the date of service, that the English Language training program is in compliance with the Accreditation Act. English Language training programs that fail to submit adequate evidence of compliance will have their SEVP certification withdrawn and will not be eligible to enroll nonimmigrant students nor be able to issue Forms I-20 for English Language training programs of study.

### Combined English Language training programs of study

Combined English Language training programs of study will receive an out of cycle review. An out of cycle review requires a school to submit evidence to SEVP within 30 days of service of the notice or be found to be out of compliance with SEVP requirements. Combined schools who cannot meet the evidence requirements of an out of cycle review will receive a corrective action plan from SEVP requesting the removal of their ESL program from their Form I-17 and will have to stop issuing Forms I-20 for their ESL programs. Combined schools who do not comply with the corrective action plan will receive a Notice of Intent to Withdraw and may subsequently have their SEVP certification withdrawn.

### Student Guidance

On May 18, 2011, SEVP distributed a SEVIS Broadcast Message informing the academic community about the Accreditation Act and its requirements. School officials have an ongoing responsibility to inform their nonimmigrant students about the Accreditation Act and its specific requirements. Nonimmigrant students currently enrolled in an ESL program of study whose certification is withdrawn, or whose school is no longer eligible to issue Forms I-20 for English Language training, will be notified via their current U.S. address listed on their Form I-20. Those students will have the following options:

1. Finish out their current session and transfer to another SEVP-certified institution's ESL program of study that is in compliance with the Act. Students will have 30 days after the end of their current session to transfer.
2. Depart the country after completion of the current session. For those nonimmigrant students who do not want to transfer, they will be required to depart the country within 30 days of the completion of their current session.

Failure of a student to transfer or depart the country, per guidance above, will result in a termination of that student's Form I-20. This may have implications on a student's ability to enter the United States in the future.

SEVP is still working on determining the accreditation of all its certified English Language training programs. It is the student's responsibility to ensure, if they continue their studies in an English Language training program, that the program of study they choose is properly accredited.

View the [complete list of regional and national accrediting agencies](#) recognized by the Department of Education.

Nonimmigrant students who have not yet entered the United States and are in possession of a Form I-20 issued by an English Language training program of study whose SEVP-certification has been withdrawn may possibly be denied entry into the country with that Form I-20. Any nonimmigrant students who are turned away must obtain another Form I-20 from an SEVP-certified English Language training program of study in compliance with the Accreditation Act.

Nonimmigrant students issued Forms I-20 prior to their English Language training program's withdrawal from SEVP-certification will be permitted to enroll in that school; however, those students must transfer at the end of the current session to another SEVP-certified English Language training program of study. Please note that schools that offer both English Language training as well as other study programs may remain SEVP-certified to issue Forms I-20 for those other SEVP-certified programs of study, even where the English Language training program of study loses certification.

Nonimmigrant students who have questions about their options should call the SEVP Response Center (SRC) at (703)603-3400. This number is staffed from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. (ET), Monday through Friday. At other times you may leave a message and an SEVP representative will return your call.

When you call, SEVP will provide nonimmigrant students with guidance and inform them of their options. Please be prepared to provide the following information to the SEVP staff:

- First and last name
- SEVIS ID number
- Program of study/institution enrolled in

- Address
- Telephone number where you can be reached
- Email address