

SEVP Spotlight

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DIRECTOR'S CORNER

SEVP Connects with Hundreds at the NAFSA 2016 Annual Conference & Expo



*A message from
Louis M. Farrell,
Director of the
Student and Exchange
Visitor Program*

In early June, I traveled to the [NAFSA 2016 Annual Conference & Expo in Denver, Colorado](#). Seven Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) leaders and subject matter experts joined me, either in person or virtually. Between us, we presented at four sessions and connected with hundreds of members of the academic community.

Over the course of these sessions, my colleagues and I listened to stakeholder feedback and shared SEVP news and information. I participated in the Open Meeting session where I reported on SEVP's progress since last year, specifically addressing how the program responded to long processing times for principal designated school official (PDSO) and designated school official (DSO) updates and the need for policy guidance on nontraditional programs.

The Open Meeting also allowed us to collect new areas that need our attention, including:

- [Curricular practical training](#) guidance.
- Dynamic education program guidance.

- Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) batch interface issues.
- Improvement of government interfaces.
- Enhancements to the SEVP Response Center.
- DSO responsibilities regarding the [Form I-983, "Training Plan for STEM OPT Students."](#)
- The timing of SEVIS releases and policy changes.
- School certification guidance for changing circumstances.

In the other sessions, SEVP discussed the forthcoming pathway programs policy guidance, initial student transfers, the speed of SEVIS changes and processing times for SEVP adjudication decisions.

As you may remember, following last year's NAFSA national conference, SEVP [released the Stakeholder Issues Response Report](#) in December 2015. This fall, SEVP plans to further increase transparency by launching the Response Catalog on Study in the States. This digital catalog will be the central repository to track and monitor SEVP's progress on feedback we receive from the international student community. The

Response Catalog will categorize each piece of feedback into the following four topic areas:

- School Certification.
- SEVIS.
- Policy.
- Customer Service and Outreach.

All feedback in the Response Catalog will include a description of the concern, SEVP's response and actions taken to address the feedback, as well as any related content available on Study in the States and [ICE.gov/SEVP](#) or distributed through a Broadcast Message. SEVP plans to update the Response Catalog regularly as we make progress on identified issues and receive new feedback.

I cannot emphasize enough how valuable it is to hear from you, our stakeholders, through forums like the NAFSA 2016 Annual Conference & Expo. Each year, I return to SEVP having learned more about our stakeholders' experiences, and these events promote discourse that leads to productive problem-solving. SEVP will continue to use these opportunities to learn from, adapt to and address stakeholder feedback as we work to fulfill our program's mission.

Take care,
Lou



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

Complying with Flight School Regulations: Tips and Best Practices for DSOs

F and M international students may attend Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified flight schools in the United States. However, school officials and international students at these schools must comply with specific regulations, including the need to receive Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approval.

The most important thing you can do to help ensure international students understand the rules for attending a flight school in the United States is communicate with them regularly and provide resources early and often. Discuss educational and professional goals with prospective students during the admissions process and make sure they understand the educational time commitment your flight school requires. Remind enrolled students how important it is for them to maintain their status and how, in order to do so, they must keep you informed of their training progress and changing life circumstances. Please point them to free federal resources like [Study in the States](#) and the [Transportation Security Administration's website](#) to help them understand the regulations.

Below are a few best practices, categorized by topic, to help you and your students comply with the federal regulations:

STUDENT RECORDS

Principal designated school officials (PDSOs) and designated school officials (DSOs) at flight

schools must keep [records of all international students' coursework](#). SEVP can request to see an international student's records at any time for an [out-of-cycle review](#), so it is important to make sure you can provide information as needed.

FULL COURSE OF STUDY

Like all F and M students who study in the United States, international students at flight schools must enroll in a full course of study to maintain student status. A typical full course of study for flight school students is 22 hours per week.

FORM I-17 UPDATES

A school's Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," must accurately reflect the school's operations. As a PDSO or DSO, it is your responsibility to ensure FAA certificates are up to date and report changes in FAA certification to SEVP within 21 days.

If you need to make updates to your school's Form I-17, review federal regulations and flight school policy guidance before submitting updates. Any new programs at your school that wish to enroll international students must be approved by SEVP before issuing the Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," to students. SEVP will also request a copy of your FAA certificate and Letter of Approved Programs to ensure the FAA has approved any new programs. Make sure your

FAA certificate expiration date is current on your Form I-17 before you submit updates.

AUTHORIZED EARLY WITHDRAWAL

If any international students need to leave the United States before completing their program of study, the best course of action is an authorized early withdrawal. M-1 students who leave early will need to obtain a new Form I-20 and pay the [I-901 SEVIS Fee](#) in order to return to the United States.

If students have questions regarding traveling on the same visa, it is their responsibility to contact their DSO and the [U.S. Department of State](#).

SEVIS

Keep up with flight school-related information by logging in to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) on a regular basis and checking for any alerts. You can also meet with your field representative and visit the [SEVIS Help Hub](#) to learn about SEVP policies and the latest SEVIS enhancements.

Alexis Gioia is the SEVP field representative for Territory #43 (Miami-Dade/Monroe Counties, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands). She frequently works with flight school DSOs in her role as a field representative.

SEVIS UPDATE

A Timeline of the Latest SEVIS Updates



In May 2016, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program deployed [SEVIS Release 6.26](#) three days after the new [24-month science, technology, engineering and mathematics \(STEM\) optional practical training \(OPT\) extension](#) regulation went into effect. This deployment added functionality that allows designated school officials to:

- Recommend 24-month STEM extensions to post-completion OPT students.
- Recommend seven-month extensions to current, approved 17-month STEM OPT students.
- Convert 17-month STEM extensions to 24-month STEM extensions.

For more information, check out the [STEM OPT Rule Implementation page](#), the [SEVIS Demonstrations page](#) and the [SEVIS Workarounds for STEM OPT Webinar recording](#), all available on the [SEVIS Help Hub](#).

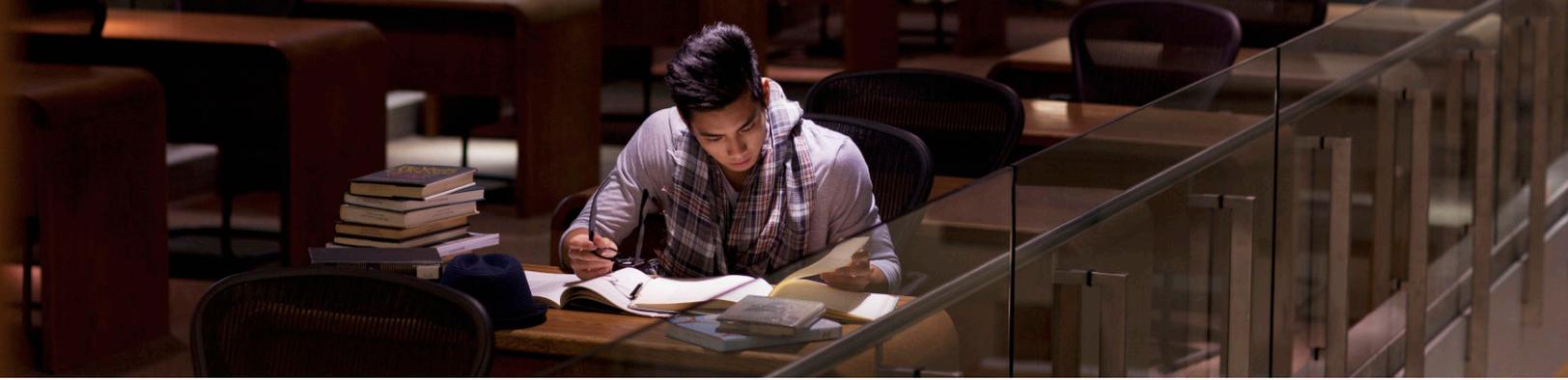


On July 1, all F-1 and M-1 students and their dependents must have the redesigned Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status." The redesigned form was part of the June 2015 SEVIS Release 6.21. Learn what's new on the redesigned Form I-20 in the [Redesigned Form I-20 SEVIS Fact Sheet](#).



On July 8, SEVIS Release 6.27 will deploy functionality changes for registering F and M students, along with a redesigned Student Information page. Please view the SEVIS Registration for F/M Students Webinar [recording](#) and the [SEVIS Release 6.27 Planning Guide](#) for more details.

To review the latest SEVIS updates, check out the new Notifications Center at the top of the home page. Also, stay tuned for a newly redesigned SEVIS Help Hub home page on Wednesday, August 3. The redesign will make it easier to navigate the SEVIS Help Hub and to stay informed about system changes.



COUNTERTERRORISM AND CRIMINAL EXPLOITATION UNIT UPDATE

Who Can Study in the States?

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) was designed to track F, M and J international visa holders in the United States. What about other nonimmigrant visa holders who want to study in the United States?

Occasionally, designated school officials (DSOs) may encounter nonimmigrant visa holders requesting permission to study in the United States. When this situation occurs, it is important to understand basic regulations pertaining to the other types of nonimmigrant visas and what is permissible under the immigration laws of the United States. For example, it is crucial for DSOs to ensure that the type of study requested is permitted. Just like F, M or J visa holders, certain restrictions apply for specified nationalities.

Although only F or M visa holders at Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified schools can obtain a full-time course of study, some part-time study is permitted for their dependents (F-2 and M-2 visa holders). F-2 and M-2 nonimmigrants may participate in part-time academic, vocational or recreational studies. If the study becomes full time, they must obtain the appropriate student status.

Additionally, some J-1 programs allow for spouses and/or dependents to accompany the J-1 visa holders. If permitted, J-2 visa holders may study in the United States.

H-1B, L1, A or G visa holders are permitted to study in the United States as long as they fulfill the intended purpose of their visit to the United States. For example, H-1B visa holders are admitted to perform specific full-time work for the company designated on their visa. As long as H-1B visa holders fulfill the visa obligations for the company that petitioned them, they may also participate in study that is incidental to the visit. Nonimmigrant visa holders generally pursue educational programs for recreational purposes or for personal fulfillment, rather than to complete a formal program.

If a nonimmigrant visa holder begins a course of study at an SEVP-certified school, the visa holder may not remain in the United States beyond the duration of permitted stay or receive an extension of stay to complete the studies. Nonimmigrant visa holders who fail to comply with the terms and conditions of the primary purpose of their visit will fall out of status and become subject to removal from the United States.

DSOs can find a list of nonimmigrant classes eligible to pursue vocational or recreational studies on the [U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website](#). School officials should also direct any questions about immigration status to their local Homeland Security Investigations office.

Editor's note: This article was updated to more accurately reflect the J-1 program rules.

OFFICE OF ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

DHS Secretary Johnson Addresses Council Members at HSAAC Meeting

On April 20, 2016, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Jeh C. Johnson attended the 10th Biannual Homeland Security Academic Advisory Council (HSAAC) Meeting in Washington, D.C.

In his remarks to HSAAC members and meeting attendees, Secretary Johnson outlined three approaches that the academic community can take to support DHS's priorities and further the department's mission. He asked council members and the academic community to:

- Recruit and educate quality students and graduates who can help fill the urgent need for cybersecurity skills and talents within DHS.
- Expand the conversation and national public dialogue regarding efforts to [counter violent extremism](#).
- Increase public vigilance, awareness and participation in DHS initiatives.

In addition to Secretary Johnson's remarks, council members spent time discussing the progress of the [International Students Subcommittee](#), the [Quadrennial Homeland Security Review](#) and new resources available to the academic community through the "If You See Something, Say Something™" campaign.

Since its formation in 2012, the council has delivered more than 120 recommendations to DHS through its six subcommittees. Recommendations from the International Students Subcommittee include:

- Supporting work to modernize the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System.
- Allowing public participation in the development of policies that affect the international student community.
- Encouraging DHS to attend more stakeholder events, resulting in the department's participation in 173 international student-focused outreach events and conferences in 2015.

The HSAAC consists of college and university presidents, academic association leaders and interagency partners who play a critical role in enhancing DHS's mission by providing recommendations that focus on key matters impacting homeland security and the academic community. Through the HSAAC, the department has a successful model that allows it to productively engage with the academic community on important issues while maintaining a commitment to its national security mission.

CONTACT US

SEVP Contacts

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is dedicated to maintaining open communication with international students and academic officials. SEVP has multiple contact options:

Our offices are open Monday through Friday,
8 a.m. to 6 p.m. EDT, except holidays

Phone: 703-603-3400

Email: SEVP@ice.dhs.gov

Find us on the web:

www.ice.gov/sevp

<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov>

Disclaimer: The information presented in the SEVP Spotlight is provided for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice.

Follow us on Twitter [@StudyinStates](https://twitter.com/StudyinStates)

Like Study in the States on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/StudyinStates)

If you need assistance with passwords or Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) technical help, call the SEVIS Help Desk at 800-892-4829 between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. EDT or email SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov

ICE Contacts

To report national vulnerabilities or national security concerns:

Contact ICE's **Counterterrorism and Criminal Exploitation Unit** at CTCEU@dhs.gov

To report exploitation of student visa programs:

Contact your local **HSI special agent**, call 1-866-DHS-2ICE (1-866-347-2423) or visit www.ice.gov

