

Spring 2021 Online Course Registration Guidelines for F-1 International Students December 23, 2020

Dear F-1 International Students,

As many of you know, we have been waiting for much-delayed guidance from the US government on what will be allowed for international students in terms of enrollment in online courses in the Spring 2021 semester.

We are pleased to let you know that the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP, the federal agency governing F-1 student regulations) has recently stated in its [December 2020 SEVP Spotlight](#) that the “COVID-19 guidance from March 2020 is still currently in place until further notice.” Given this announcement, UF will be able to allow continued online instruction for many international students. Unfortunately, however, there are still some unanswered questions regarding Spring 2021 registration. If/when additional guidance is released by SEVP, the UFIC will send out an update.

In the meantime, we are currently able to confirm the following:

- ***New F-1 students arriving in the U.S. for the spring semester must enroll full time and must have at least one course that meets the physical presence requirement(s).*** This includes students in the following situations:
 - Any student who was issued an I-20 for reason of “Initial Attendance” for Spring 2021, whether they were specifically admitted to Spring 2021 or deferred to Spring 2021 due to inability to study within the U.S. in Fall 2020.
 - Any student who was issued an I-20 for reason of “Initial Attendance – Change of Status Requested,” if the change of status is approved prior to January 15, 2021.

- ***Continuing F-1 students who were enrolled at a U.S. college as of March 9, 2020 must enroll full time (unless they are all but thesis/dissertation, or in their final semester) and may enroll 100% online in Spring 2021, whether the student is present in the U.S. or abroad.*** This includes the following students:
 - Any F1 student who was in the U.S. in spring 2020, studying at UF in a degree program that began as of spring 2020 or earlier and is continuing studies in the same degree program.
 - Any F1 student who was in the U.S. in spring 2020 at another SEVP certified school and is completing a SEVIS transfer to the University of Florida to begin studies for spring 2021, as long as the student is inside the U.S. and completes the check-in requirement with the University of Florida International Center.
 - Any F1 student who completed a SEVIS transfer to UF or a Change of Education Level at UF for fall 2020, and is continuing studies in the same program.

- Any F1 student who graduated from one program at UF either in summer C or fall 2020 and will begin a new degree program at UF in spring 2021 as long as the student obtained a timely change of education level I-20.
 - Any F1 student who was engaged in post-completion practical training (OPT or STEM OPT) during 2020 and will subsequently begin a new degree program in spring 2021; provided the student obtained a timely transfer pending I-20 (if doing a SEVIS transfer between schools) or a timely change of education level I-20 from UF.
 - Any F1 student who began a degree program at UF in summer 2020 (within the U.S.), and continued full time enrollment in fall 2020 while still present in the U.S., will be considered a continuing student for spring 2021.
- ***For new students who were admitted to and studied in the U.S. in fall 2020, it is still unclear whether they are allowed 100% online enrollment in Spring 2021.*** Currently, we therefore recommend that such students plan to enroll full time and have at least one course that meets the physical presence requirements.
 - NOTE: SEVIS-transfer students who were initially admitted for fall 2020 but could not return to study in the U.S. for fall 2020 and who have received the SEVIS Data Fix approval for spring 2021 now have an “Initial Attendance” I-20; thus the ***new*** F1 student requirements noted above now apply to such students.

This is the information which we can confirm at this time. We will update it if we receive any further guidance from SEVP. If you have any questions, please contact [your specific F-1 Advisor](#).