



July 7, 2020

[President Holloway](#) announced on Monday, July 6, 2020, that Rutgers will operate in a hybrid mode during the fall 2020 semester, delivering courses predominantly via remote instruction with a limited number of in-person classes.

Also on Monday, the [Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\)](#) published a “[Broadcast Message](#)” on remote instruction at US universities during the fall 2020 semester, particularly as it relates to the legal status of international students in F-1 status and their eligibility to enter or stay in the United States. This new guidance modifies the previous flexibility announced in March that permitted international students to take all courses online during the spring and summer terms (more than the traditional limit of one course/three credit hours online) while in the US or overseas.

According to the [SEVP FAQs](#) published on Tuesday, July 7, 2020, this guidance takes effect at the start of the school’s fall semester – September 1, 2020 for Rutgers.

The key points of the guidance as they apply to international students in F-1 status include:

- Students attending schools operating entirely online may not take a full online course load and remain in the United States. ***Does not apply to Rutgers.***
- Students attending schools operating under normal in-person classes are bound by existing federal regulations. ***Does not apply to Rutgers.***
- Students attending schools adopting a hybrid model—that is, a mixture of online and in person classes—will be allowed to take more than one class or three credit hours online. ***Rutgers falls under this category.***
- Students attending school in the US in the fall will need newly issued I-20s verifying that the school is operating in a hybrid mode, that their program is not entirely online, that the student is not taking an entirely online course load for the fall 2020 semester, and that the student is taking the minimum number of online classes required to make normal progress in their program of study. ***Rutgers Global ISSS is in the process of developing a procedure to issue new I-20s for all students who will need it.***
- If the school changes to fully online instruction mid-semester, or a student changes their course selection, resulting in a fully online course load, the new policy states that they will not be eligible to stay in the country and will have to pursue other options. ***Rutgers students should discuss with their ISSS adviser.***
- F-1 students who are outside the US may maintain continued enrollment at their school through fully online classes, however, their SEVIS records cannot remain active during this time. ***Applies to continuing Rutgers students who are overseas. The follow-up [ICE FAQ](#)***

*list published on July 7, 2020, presents a different perspective on this scenario, implying that students may maintain their status while overseas. We understand that this could impact a large number of our international students who are outside of the US this fall. We are seeking clarification on the issue and will provide an update as soon as it is available.*

A situational breakdown of how this guidance could affect our international students follows.

**Continuing students who are currently in the US** may continue to take more than three online credits (the pre-pandemic limit) required towards their full course of study in the fall and maintain their active SEVIS status; however, they cannot register for a fully online course load. Students must be registered for some in-person coursework or degree requirements as part of their full course load (minimum 12 credits for undergraduate students, 9 for graduate students, the full-time policy may differ in some RBHS schools). **We are developing our institutional interpretation on how students can meet this in-person requirement.**

**Continuing students who are in the US pursuing practical training or are engaged in non-coursework degree requirements** (e.g. PhD students who have completed coursework and are engaged in research, students on OPT/CPT) can maintain their active SEVIS status as long as they are complying with F-1 regulations.

**Continuing students who are outside the US** may take all remote/online classes, although this may impact their SEVIS status and ability to return to the US. Students should [contact an ISSS advisor](#) to discuss their situation. Rutgers Global ISSS will work with students to update SEVIS records, and assist with the process of returning to campus at a future time. As noted above, we are seeking clarification on this issue and will provide an update as soon as it is available. We are also exploring offering Study Abroad for international students in their home countries.

**New international students who are in the US (transferring from another SEVIS approved institution)** may take more than three online credits required towards their full course of study in the fall to maintain their active SEVIS status; however, they cannot take a full course of study online.

**New international students who are overseas** can activate their SEVIS records only when they arrive in the US. If new international students are not able to obtain their visas and travel to the US in time to arrive for the fall semester (due to either the suspension of visa issuance services at embassies and consulates worldwide or travel restrictions), they may choose to enroll in a remote study option (fully online through Rutgers or via the [ROSE](#) program if in China, provided they are in compliance with local regulations), or defer their admission. **We will work with new students to defer their I-20 start dates, but they can begin their academic programs at Rutgers from overseas.**

Rutgers Global, the Rutgers Office of Federal Relations, the Rutgers Office of General Counsel and others are working to better understand aspects of the policy that are not yet fully clear. Rutgers, many universities, and several national academic organizations are also advocating for changes to this policy or to stop it from going into effect.

We will provide further guidance as it becomes available.