

From: [International Student & Scholar Services](#)
Cc: [International Student & Scholar Services](#)
Subject: ISSS Update: Enrollment Options & F-1 Status (per July 24 SEVP Update)
Date: Thursday, July 30, 2020 6:42:52 PM
Attachments: [Middlebury College-Fall 2020 Program Update Ltr--July 30.pdf](#)
[07-30-2020-ISSS Email to Students--Continuing.pdf](#)

Dear continuing F-1 students & F-1 students returning from a leave of absence,

(Our international student email list includes individuals who do not need visa support. We are unable to modify the list at this time. If you are not an F-1 student, you may disregard this email after reading item #1. F-1 students, please read on!)

We know you have been awaiting an update from ISSS. Thank you for your patience. This is a long email and we ask that you read it today in its entirety because it contains valuable and timely information.

The College must determine which students will study remotely and who will need housing in the next week. [By Monday, August 3, we ask you to notify us of your plan to enroll remotely, be on campus, or to take a leave.](#) If you still need to obtain a visa and have not secured an appointment on or before August 14, or face U.S. travel restrictions or flight limitations from your home country, you will need to study remotely or take a term off.

- 1) **Return to Campus Expectations:** First, we want to encourage all of you to review the [email sent on July 24](#) and the College's [Return to Campus Guide](#), which outlines expectations for students returning to Vermont. You will also find other informative resources regarding fall term on the [Middlebury 2020-2021](#) website. There is a lot of information to consider. We encourage you to take some time to review it carefully so you know the commitment you are making in returning in person to the area. Please also remember to bring a mask and a personal thermometer with you, as you must wear a mask at all times except when you are alone and take your temperature daily.
- 2) **SEVP/Immigration Updates:** We know that there has been much uncertainty swirling around all of us since the ICE/SEVP broadcast message on July 6 and the July 7 FAQ, followed by the July 14 U.S. District Court announcement. Then, the quickly produced July 15 SEVP FAQ contained conflicting and unclear guidance with regard to fall semester 2020. This lack of clarity affected ISSS's ability to advise you effectively with regard to your enrollment plans and other concerns you have.

On July 24, SEVP provided additional guidance that helped make the situation clearer, especially with regard to the College's planned academic approach to fall term. The [July 24 SEVP guidance](#) and associated FAQ provide more flexibility to the full-time enrollment requirements. For now, the guidance only applies to fall 2020. In keeping with the guidance, ISSS will submit our fall procedural adaptation update to SEVP.

We provide the attached ISSS update to help you make an informed decision about your fall plans.

We will be adding this to our [ISSS COVID-19 FAQ & Fall 2020 Updates](#) and anticipate that you will have additional questions. If you need further guidance, please email the ISSS team at iss@middlebury.edu or arrange for an appointment with an advisor through our [calendly](#) online scheduling tool.

The ISSS team is committed to supporting and advocating for Middlebury College's international community. This has always been central to our work. The ISSS team is grateful for the opportunity we have to help our international students continue their Middlebury education and experience. Remember—we're here for you!

We hope this information helps you with your decision. Please reach out to us, if you need further input.

Best wishes for continued good health for you and your families.

~Kathy

and the ISSS Team—Kelly O'Connell, Christy Fry, Kas Singh, Loren Scott, and Carolyn Dahm

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Need to meet virtually with us?

To make an appointment, use our online scheduling tool at: <https://calendly.com/middleburyiss> or e-mail iss@middlebury.edu with your available days/times.

**If you need to submit a document to ISSS, please use the Document Submission Form:*
<https://forms.middlebury.edu/international/iss/document-submission-form>

Middlebury College – International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)

For continuing F-1 students and F-1 students returning from a leave of absence.

This ISSS update contains an outline of enrollment options (on campus, remote, or leave of absence) and their impact on F-1 student visa status, travel guidance, and a next steps summary.

On July 24, SEVP provided additional guidance that helped make the uncertain situation for F-1 students clearer, especially with regard to the College's planned academic approach to fall term. The [July 24 SEVP guidance](#) and associated FAQ provide more flexibility to the full-time enrollment requirements. For now, the guidance only applies to fall semester, based on the program update the College will provide to SEVP.

*The College must confirm decisions about fall courses, housing assignments and pre-arrival preparations soon. If you have not yet notified your dean of your enrollment plans, please do so **by 5 pm EDT on Monday, August 3.***

Enrollment options for Middlebury College students in light of the July 24 SEVP guidance:

1. [International students continuing their F-1 status \(since before March 9, 2020\)](#) may enroll in a full-time course load from inside or outside the U.S. to maintain their F-1 status.
 - a) Continuing F-1 students may take all of their courses online (if needed) from outside the U.S. or on campus and still maintain their visa status. They must take a full course load (3-5 courses)/term.
 - b) In March 2020, SEVP granted a temporary exception to the existing F-1 regulations that typically permits only one online course to count towards a student's full time enrollment. This exception, which allows a load of all online courses for continuing students, is in effect for fall semester 2020 while the COVID-19 emergency continues. *(Students returning from an LOA and new students cannot take all their classes online. They must enroll in at least one course that requires in-person presence.)*
 - c) Continuing F-1 students who participate in a Middlebury-approved study abroad program (through a university located outside the U.S. or a domestic study away program) will also be able to maintain their status while engaged in that program, provided it represents full-time enrollment and meets the study abroad guidelines as set forth by [International Programs](#). ISSS will maintain your SEVIS record.
 - d) The SEVP guidance allows continuing students to maintain F-1 status for eligibility for benefits such as Curricular Practical Training (CPT) and Optional Practical Training (OPT) in the future. *(Under current USCIS guidance, F-1 students must apply for OPT from within the U.S. During the academic year, ISSS will offer several CPT and post-completion OPT workshops, most likely delivered remotely.)*
 - e) If the College needs to switch from in-person or hybrid instruction to fully online at some point in the semester, students will be able to maintain their non-immigrant status as long as students do not violate U.S. laws or regulations that require SEVIS record termination or their removal from the U.S.
 - f) If you study remotely from outside the U.S., ISSS will make a note about that in your record when we do SEVIS registration. We will not issue an updated I-20 to reflect that because it is not required.

Next steps:

- If you plan to study remotely and have not notified us yet, please email DOS@middlebury.edu to confirm your remote learner status. The Registrar designated Monday, August 3, the first day of registration, for students who confirmed their enrollment status by July 30.

- If you will return to Vermont, carry a valid I-20 (signed within 6 months), passport, F-1 visa (unless you are a citizen of Canada or Bermuda, which do not require an F-1 visa) and the ISSS letter.
- Apply for a new visa, if needed. If by August 3 you cannot secure a visa appointment on or before August 14, you must make other plans for fall and either study remotely or defer your return.
- Arrival day for students returning to Vermont to pursue their studies is **Wednesday, August 26**.
 - See the [Return to Campus Guide](#) for instructions about the pre-arrival quarantine and more.
 - Due to COVID-19 precautions and arrival testing, you must arrive on the arrival day so please make your travel arrangements accordingly.
 - If you have any questions about the arrival dates and protocols, please contact your dean.

2. **New international students and returnees from a Leave of Absence (LOA)** may enroll in a full-time course load from inside or outside the U.S. to begin or continue their studies.

- a) Students who remain outside the U.S. will take courses remotely—all online. They will not be in F-1 status until they enter the U.S. to begin taking courses in person, on campus in Vermont.
- b) New students and LOA Returnees who enter the U.S. with an “initial status” I-20 will only attain and maintain F-1 status if they enter the U.S. to pursue a full-time course load that is not entirely online. They must take at least one course that requires in-person presence for an integral part of the course.
- c) Middlebury’s in-person or hybrid/blended courses fulfill this requirement. A hybrid/hyflex class could also satisfy this obligation if they participate in the on-campus, in-person aspects of a hyflex course.

Next steps:

- Determine whether you plan to enroll in the College by studying remotely or in Vermont this fall.
- Notify your dean of your decision by Monday, August 3.
- If returning to Vermont, carry a valid I-20 (signed within 6 months), passport and visa (if needed).
- Apply for a new visa, if needed. **If by August 3 you cannot secure a visa appointment on or before August 14, you must make alternate plans for fall—either study remotely or defer your return.**
- When you register for fall classes, if you will be in the U.S. you need to be sure to select at least one course that satisfies the in-person/physical attendance requirement.

3. **International students who choose to take a Leave of Absence (LOA) for fall 2020.**

- a) Please notify your dean that you wish to take a leave of absence, **no later than Monday, August 3**. The dean will record your decision and notify ISSS of your intention to withdraw. Then, ISSS will “terminate” your SEVIS record since you will no longer maintain your status during the fall term. This break in your F-1 status will likely make you ineligible for practical training (CPT/OPT) in summer 2021.
- b) ISSS will reach out to students returning from an LOA about 2-3 months prior to the start date of their intended return to initiate the I-20 process. *(I-20 applications are due November 1 for February entry and June 1 for September entry.)*
- c) Students with a valid F-1 visa in their passport may use it, along with a valid I-20, which they may use to renew their visa and/or to travel to the U.S. Students who need to renew their visas are eligible to apply for an F-1 visa at a U.S. consulate no earlier than 120 days of their program start date. ISSS will issue updated I-20s, as needed.

Next step:

- If you decide to take a Leave of Absence, please notify your dean **by 5 pm EDT on Monday, August 3**. This will allow the College to make appropriate arrangements for the opening of school.

Travel Guidance:

- 1. Travel restrictions** into the U.S. still exist for several countries (including Brazil, China, and Iran, as well as the Schengen Area, UK, and Ireland—unless granted a national interest exemption). Please review the [Proclamations](#) and consult with ISSS if you want to make plans to enter the U.S. The restrictions relate to geographic locations not citizenship, in most cases, so you may be able to visit another country and then enter the U.S., if needed.
- 2. National Interest Exemptions:** The U.S. Department of State, in their [July 22 announcement](#), provided a blanket exemption for F-1 students from the Schengen Area, the UK and Ireland to allow entry to the U.S. F-1 students from Europe may now seek entry to the United States. On July 23, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officials at Logan International Airport confirmed that CBP is following that guidance and students should proceed with travel accordingly, per the DOS announcement. Students should monitor the [Department of State website](#) for updates due to the rapidly changing nature of the current landscape.
- 3. ISSS prepared a Middlebury College program update letter for visa applications and travel.** The letter may be used to request an expedited appointment to renew your visa (if needed), to present at your visa appointment (if asked), and to show the CBP officer when you request entry to the U.S. (if asked for details about Middlebury College's plans for fall).

Summary:

To summarize, international students must:

1. Choose an enrollment option (on campus in Vermont, remotely from abroad—in Middlebury College courses or in an approved study abroad program, or take a leave of absence) **by Monday, August 3.**
2. Communicate with their dean or the Dean of Students regarding a decision to take an LOA or to confirm their remote status. *(If you already completed this step, no action is needed.)*
3. Intend to enroll in courses from on campus in Vermont if they do not notify the dean otherwise.
4. Register for and enroll in a full-time course load (continuing students can be online only; new students and returnees with an initial I-20 must include at least one course that requires in-person presence).
5. Anticipate and adhere to travel restrictions or barriers, as well as pre-arrival quarantine protocols.
6. Carry the Middlebury College program update letter in hand when entering the U.S.

We intend to add to our [ISSS COVID-19 FAQ & Fall 2020 Updates](#) and anticipate that you will have additional questions. If you need further guidance, please email the ISSS team at iss@middlebury.edu or arrange for an appointment with an advisor through our [calendly](#) online scheduling tool.

We hope this information helps you with your decision. Please reach out to us, if you need further input.

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