

Fall 2020  
FAQs for F-1 International Students

Dear Meredith F-1 International Students,

As you know, Meredith College and the Office of International Programs (OIP) continue to monitor the latest developments related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on our communities at home and abroad. The health, safety, and well-being of our students, including our beloved F-1 international students, are of paramount importance to us.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)'s Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) **recently rescinded the July 6 announcement** which did not allow exemptions for international students taking online classes in the fall 2020 semester. [New guidance was issued from ICE on July 24, 2020.](#)

We have added an FAQ section to our website to keep our new and continuing F-1 students informed about their options for the fall 2020 semester and to clarify new guidance as it is issued. As we continue to learn more and receive additional guidance from ICE and SEVP, we will update this page.

We also encourage students to visit the College's [Staying Strong website](#) often for updates related to COVID-19, Meredith operations, the academic calendar, and community health and safety standards.

While the OIP is advising students remotely this fall, we will do everything we can to advocate for international students during this unusual and stressful time. Meredith College cares about you and sincerely values your presence at our college. We are in this together.

Sincerely,  
The Office of International Programs  
Meredith College

## FALL 2020 FAQs FOR F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### [NEW ICE GUIDANCE REGARDING FALL 2020 - ISSUED ON JULY 24](#)

#### **What is the current policy?**

On July 15, 2020, ICE's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) rescinded the July 6 directive that it would no longer provide exemptions for international students taking online classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic during the fall 2020 semester. [On July 24, 2020, ICE issued clarifying guidance.](#) We anticipate additional guidance from SEVP will be coming soon. - updated July 28, 2020

#### **How is Meredith conducting classes this fall?**

Meredith will operate under a hybrid model and will be delivering classes through a combination of in-person, online, and hybrid (combination of in-person and online) methods. We encourage students to visit the [Staying Strong website](#) often for updates related to COVID-19, Meredith operations, the academic calendar, and community health and safety standards.

## **NEW INITIAL F-1 STUDENTS**

**I am a new F-1 student in Initial status. Will I be able to start my studies at Meredith in the fall 2020 semester?**

Yes, under the following scenarios:

- New international students who remain outside of the United States for the fall semester will be able to take 100% of their classes online.
- International students who are in Initial status in SEVIS **may not enter the United States AND take a full course load online.**
- International students in Initial SEVIS status may enter the United States to begin taking classes if their schedule is not 100% online. Our initial interpretation of this guidance is that international students must have **at least one in-person class (1-3 credits) in their fall schedules.** This class can be a fully in-person or a hybrid (mix of online and in-person instruction).

**As a new initial F-1 student, can I take a fully online course load in the fall 2020 with an Active SEVIS record?**

No. Students with initial I-20s may not enter the United States AND seek to enroll in a fully online course load during the fall 2020 semester.

**What if I come to Meredith and start the fall 2020 semester under an in-person or hybrid model and the class unexpectedly moves to fully online during the semester?**

The July 24, 2020 guidance states that students who are present and studying in the United States for the fall 2020 semester **WILL be able to continue their studies fully online** and remain in the United States should Meredith College have to shift to an entirely online format.

**Can a new F-1 international take a fully online course load from outside the United States?**

Yes. You do not need an I-20 or an Active SEVIS record to enroll in courses from outside the United States.

New international students who stay outside of the United States and enroll in fully online courses will request a new I-20 with a deferred start date (possibly to Spring 2021) from the OIP. New students will be activated in SEVIS once they arrive in the United States and can begin taking in-person or hybrid classes.

**I am a new international student preparing for my visa appointment at the embassy or consulate. Does Meredith College need to re-issue my I-20 to indicate that I will NOT have a fall schedule that is 100% online?**

No. According to the Clarifying Questions issued by ICE on July 24, this is no longer necessary.

**I am a new international student beginning my studies in fall 2020, and I plan to remain outside of the United States and take a fully online course load during the fall semester. Will I be eligible for a CPT (internships) in summer 2021?**

As of today, the answer is NO. You will not be eligible for CPT (or OPT) until you have been enrolled full time for two consecutive semesters in Active F-1 status.

\*\*Note for graduate programs: If your graduate program requires immediate participation in CPT, you can work with the OIP to authorize this employment. -updated July 28, 2020

### **CONTINUING F-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS**

**I am a continuing F-1 international student with an Active SEVIS record. Does the current policy apply to me? What are my options for the fall 2020 semester?**

Yes, it applies to you. According to the July 24 guidance, current or continuing F-1 international students can take classes with a variety of delivery methods: in-person, hybrid, or fully online from inside the United States. At this time, our understanding is that your SEVIS record will not be impacted so long as you enroll in a full time course load and do not violate the terms of your F-1 visa, such as engaging in unauthorized employment or dropping below full-time enrollment.

**Can a continuing F-1 international student with an Active SEVIS record take a fully online course load in fall 2020 at Meredith from inside the United States?**

Yes. According to the Clarifying Questions issued by ICE on July 24, continuing F-1 students are allowed to take a fully online course load from within the United States. -updated July 28, 2020

**Can a continuing F-1 international student with an Active SEVIS record take a fully online course load in fall 2020 at Meredith from outside the United States? What happens to my SEVIS record?**

Yes. If you began your studies at Meredith in summer 2020 or earlier and have an active SEVIS record, you can enroll in a fully online course load in fall 2020 from outside the United States. Your SEVIS record will remain active so long as you maintain full-time enrollment. -updated July 28, 2020

**I am a continuing F-1 student with an Active SEVIS record. What if I start the fall 2020 semester under an in-person or hybrid model but the classes unexpectedly move to fully online?**

The July 24, 2020 guidance states that students who are present and studying in the United States for the fall 2020 semester **WILL be able to continue their studies fully online** and remain in the United States should Meredith College have to shift to an entirely online format.

**As a continuing F-1 student, if I choose to remain outside of the United States, do I need to get a new F-1 to reenter?**

No, not if your current F-1 remains valid.

**I am a current F-1 international student, but I left the United States at the end of the Spring 2020 semester. My F-1 visa has expired. Am I still eligible to renew my F-1? What is the likelihood that it will be renewed or granted?**

According to ICE's Clarifying Questions from July 24, international students who were enrolled in a course of study in the United States on March 9, 2020, and who decided to leave the country will likely remain eligible for a visa as the March guidance allowed students to enroll in a full online course of study from inside the United States or from abroad.

However, please remember that whether or not you will be issued or denied a visa is based on the discretion of the U.S. Department of State.

**What if I am a continuing F-1 international student with an Active SEVIS record who is out of the United States for more than 5 months?**

Our best interpretation of the new guidance is that international students with Active SEVIS records can remain Active if they enroll in a full time course load. When Meredith College returns to normal operations, F-1 students must return to campus to maintain that Active status.

**Continuing students who are in the U.S. pursuing practical training or are engaged in non-coursework degree requirements** (e.g. students on OPT/CPT) can maintain an active SEVIS status as long as they are complying with F-1 regulations.

**Continuing students who are outside the U.S. should make every effort to return this fall.** If you are unable to return, you may take all synchronous and/or asynchronous classes. However, we STRONGLY recommend you discuss your SEVIS status with our international student advisor, Traci Stewart Johnson ([tsjohnson@meredith.edu](mailto:tsjohnson@meredith.edu)) as we will want to ensure you retain the ability to return to the US in the future to complete studies.

## **TRANSFER F-1 STUDENTS**

**If an incoming student transfers their SEVIS record to Meredith College for the fall semester will they be considered a new or continuing student?**

If the student is in the United States, they will be considered a continuing student for enrollment purposes. If the student is outside the United States and chooses to remain so for the fall semester, their SEVIS record will remain in Initial status and will likely be deferred until Spring 2021.

**New international students who are in the U.S. (transferring from another SEVIS approved institution)** may take a full course of synchronous or asynchronous study online according to the July 24, 2020 guidance.

Latest update: 7/28/2020 by Liz Yaros and TSJ

Source: <https://global.psu.edu/covidintlfaq#New>