



International Student & Scholar Services  
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## International Student and Scholar FAQ's: COVID-19

Please note, our primary concern is always your safety. UMass Boston and ISSS are here for you.

- **Now that UMass Boston is remote, am I able to have an appointment with an adviser in ISSS?**
    - *Yes! While we may not be in the office we are still working hard to support all of our students. To set up an appointment, please email [ISSS@UMB.EDU](mailto:ISSS@UMB.EDU), and we will connect you with the correct advisor to answer your questions.*
  - **As my courses are now online for the remainder of the Spring Semester, can I return to my home country? What about the 5-month out of country rule?**
    - *Please note, that the decision to return home is a personal one, and ISSS cannot direct you to make the "correct" choice. You must pay attention to travel restrictions, and the fact that many airlines are suspending routes to and from the USA. We recommend you review all respective countries government websites and embassies, that you may be travelling to for information about possible, or upcoming, travel restrictions.*
    - *Yes, you may return home, and remain in active SEVIS status. SEVP has issued guidance, in response to COVID-19 and Universities moving to remote learning. As long as you maintain your registration and make academic progress throughout this time, it will satisfy SEVP's requirements. The 5-month rule will not apply, if you maintain your studies,*
  - **I'm currently in my home country or am traveling to my home country, but my visa is expired or will be expiring prior to the start of Fall 2020 semester. What should I do?**
    - *The U.S. Department of State announced that effective March 20, 2020, routine visa services at all U.S. Embassies and Consulates are temporarily suspended. We urge you to check the U.S. Embassy website in your home country, for more information.*
    - *F-1 or J-1 students/scholars who are currently enrolled at UMass Boston and will not complete with their program this spring or summer, will need the following documentation to re-enter the U.S.:*
      - *A passport valid for at least six months beyond your intended re-entry to the U.S;*
      - *A valid visa stamp;*
      - *A valid I-20/DS-2019 reflecting a future program completion date (program end date listed on page 1 of I-20 or DS-2019);*
      - *A valid travel signature (must be provided within one year of your intended re-entry date).*
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- **Do I need a travel signature to depart the U.S.?**
    - No. You are free to depart the U.S. and do not require a travel signature on your Form I-20 or DS-2019 to depart. However, you will require a travel signature to re-enter the U.S. If you need a travel signature for re-entry, you may request a new I-20 or DS-2019, with a travel signature, at the following links:  
[I-20 Replacement](#)  
[DS-2019 Replacement](#)
  - **How can I receive my replacement I-20 or DS-2019?**
    - On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020, SEVP issued new guidance for shipment of I-20's. I-20's may now be scanned and emailed to students, they will no longer have to be shipped. Students requesting a replacement I-20 will receive a digital copy of the document, to print at home.
    - This change does not apply to DS-2019's. The U.S. State Department still requires that DS-2019's have physical signatures and therefore J-1 students/scholars will need to pay for the document to be shipped via Fed-Ex or UPS. If there is a regulatory change on this, we will notify you ASAP.
  - **What should I do before I leave the U.S.?**
    - Please complete the [2020 Spring Travel Registration](#) e-form to alert ISSS advisers of your travel plans.
    - If you have already left, and have not filled out the form, please do so now.
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- **Spring 2020 is my last semester at UMass Boston. How will the COVID-19 response impact me?**
    - If you are completing your program this semester, congratulations!
      - If you are J-1 designation, you have 30 days of grace, in the U.S. after completing your program to:
        - Depart the USA
        - Transfer to a different SEVIS program
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Please note that if you need to extend your DS-2019, you MUST request this before the end date of your program. Please contact our office with any questions.

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- F-1 Students have a 60-day grace period after completing their program to:
  - Depart the US
  - Apply for [Post-OPT](#)
  - [Transfer to a different SEVIS program](#)
  - [Change your academic level](#) at UMass Boston
- **I am currently on OPT/STEM and I do not have a job, will there be an extension of the 90/150-day unemployment time, due to COVID-19?**
  - There has been no additional guidance from USCIS, concerning the 90-day/-150-day unemployment rules. As of now, student should continue to follow [8 CFR 214.2\(f\)\(10\)\(ii\)\(E\) – Periods of unemployment during post-completion](#).
  - ISSS recommends that students document all attempts to find employment, during this time.

- **I do not plan to leave the USA, but am facing economic hardship due to COVID-19, what can I do?**
  - *A student facing severe economic hardship may apply for Off-Campus work authorization, with USCIS. In compliance with 8 CFR 214.2(f)(9)(ii)*
    - *Severe economic hardship.* If other employment opportunities are not available or are otherwise insufficient, an eligible F-1 student may request off-campus employment work authorization based upon severe economic hardship caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control. These circumstances may include loss of financial aid or on-campus employment without fault on the part of the student, substantial fluctuations in the value of currency or exchange rate, inordinate increases in tuition and/or living costs, unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support, medical bills, or other substantial and unexpected expenses.
    - *A DSO may recommend student for work off-campus for one-year intervals by certifying the following:*
      - *The student has been in F-1 status for one full academic year;*
      - *The student is in good standing, and pursuing a full-course of study;*
      - *The student has demonstrated that acceptance of employment will not interfere with their ability to study;*
      - *The student has demonstrated that the employment is necessary to avoid severe economic hardship due to unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of the student.*

**If you believe you may fall into this category, please contact [ISSS@UMB.EDU](mailto:ISSS@UMB.EDU) for guidance.**

**Please remember, our office, and the entire University, is here to support you during this difficult time.**

**Stay safe, and we are always here to talk!**

*Shaun P. Morgan*

Shaun P. Morgan  
Executive Director  
International Student and Scholar Services

