

Date: July 7, 2020

From: ISSO

Subject: Fall 2020 F-1 International Student Enrollment Guidance

Dear College Deans, Associate & Assistant Deans, Department Chairs and Program Directors,

In a July 6, 2020 Broadcast Message, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) communicated its long-awaited Fall 2020 enrollment guidance for F-1 students. While certain issues were addressed, there are still many questions unanswered. Also, it is possible that this information could change over the coming weeks and months. As such, the International Student & Scholar Office (ISSO) will continue to update its COVID-19 website and develop a number of FAQs as we learn more.

Summary Points

- The ISSO interprets the broadcast message to say that since UNC Charlotte has decided to offer a combination of in-person, hybrid, and online classes for Fall 2020, F-1 students will be allowed to take more than one online class and count it toward fulltime enrollment as long as they are registered for a minimum of one class that is in-person or hybrid.
- Our conservative interpretation for the definition of hybrid classes has traditionally been 51% or more in-person. However, based on the current situation and adapting to best practices in the field of immigration advising across the U.S., the ISSO will use its discretion and revisit this percentage breakdown. We will announce a new determination by the close of business on Thursday, July 9th.
- If a school changes its operational stance mid-semester and as a result, F-1 students change to all online classes, the students must immediately exit the U.S. or transfer to a school that offers in-person classes.
- F-1 students in English language training (such as UNC Charlotte's ELTI) are not permitted to enroll in any online courses.

What Can UNC Charlotte Do?

Immediate Needs from Campus Partners:

- In order to assist the international student population to maintain compliance, UNC Charlotte needs to offer a reasonable number of in-person and hybrid classes for the duration of the Fall 2020 semester, especially departments that enroll a high percentage of international students (CCI and COE).
 - If there is any way in which the Deans of these colleges could identify a critical mass of faculty who would be willing to teach additional hybrid or in-person courses for the duration of the Fall 2020 semester? This would ensure ongoing international student enrollment and immigration compliance.
- If possible, there needs to be a mechanism and clear instructions on how students can identify in-person, hybrid, and online classes in the course catalogue.
- Is it possible to allow F-1 international students to have priority for in-person or hybrid courses?

ISSO Plan of Action

- The ISSO will communicate with all F-1 international students to educate them on the July 6, 2020 SEVP Broadcast Message and post updates to its website.
- The ISSO will develop and offer a virtual Town Hall for all international students, faculty and staff to address their questions and concerns.
- In order to ensure immigration compliance, the ISSO must first update and re-issue all Form I-20 immigration documents by August 4th (roughly 900 individual documents) and submit a modified operational plan to SEVP by August 1st.
- The data source for this project will be F-1 student enrollment in on-person, hybrid or online courses.
- This requirement poses a major challenge to the ISSO as many students will not yet be registered for classes prior to August 4th.
- Therefore, realistically, UNC Charlotte and other institutions around the country will struggle to fully meet this requirement.
- The ISSO will continue to seek the best interpretation of the July 6, 2020 SEVP broadcast message and ongoing developments and update its website accordingly. This website will serve as a reference for international student enrollment requirements for the campus community.

As you can imagine, we are receiving a high volume of inquiries and are doing our best to get information out as quickly as possible.

If you have any questions feel free to contact either of us.

Yours truly,

Tarek Elshayeb, Director

Denise Medeiros, Associate Director

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND SCHOLAR OFFICE
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