

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) from International Students about COVID-19

The Office of International Education has compiled this list of FAQs to address concerns our international community has expressed during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have any questions about your status as an international student at UTA, please review the document carefully. If you cannot find an answer to your question or situation in this document, our team is always willing to assist you and can be contacted at international@uta.edu.

Visas & Immigration Status

<p>I want to speak with an advisor from UTA's Office of International Education. What should I do?</p>	<p>Because we are not currently providing in-person services, international students should send their questions or a request for phone advising to international@uta.edu. Please see additional instructions here.</p>
<p>How can I request and receive documents since the Office of International Education and Swift Center is currently closed?</p>	<p>During this time all document requests should be submitted through email to international@uta.edu. Request forms are located at the Office of International Education (OIE) forms page. The completed form should be attached as a pdf to the email. Please include your name and student ID in the subject line. Document processing time will continue to be 7 to 10 business days for all requests.</p> <p>Until further notice OIE will no longer be able to offer the service of checking documents for OPT applications. Before we create the I-20 for OPT, we will have checked the I-765 form carefully, and will continue to make suggestions for that form through a detailed checklist provided to each applicant. Detailed instructions for the 12 month OPT application can be found here.</p> <p>Document Shipping OIE will accept document shipment requests from students via eShipGlobal in order for our students to receive documents during the time our office is closed for visits. We are able to provide free 3-day Priority Shipping via FedEx.</p>
<p>I will graduate in May 2020, and my plan was to return to my home country. However, due to COVID-19 I would prefer to stay in the U.S.</p> <p>What are my options?</p>	<p>F-1 students have three options:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remain in the United States and apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) within 60 days of program completion. 2. Pursue another degree in the United States either at UTA or by transferring your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record to another institution. You must obtain the I-20 for the new program within the 60 day grace period and begin the new program within 5 months of completion of previous program. 3. Remain in the United States during the 60-day grace period after graduation. It is important that students either apply for OPT, receive an I-20 for a new program, change status, or depart from the United States within this period. When the 60 day grace period ends, valid F-1 status will also end if no action is taken.
<p>My visa is expiring, and I am unable to travel to my home country at this time. What should I do?</p>	<p>Students may stay in the United States on an expired F-1/J-1 visa as long as they maintain their immigration status by being in possession of a valid I-20/DS-2019 and an I-94 Arrival/Departure record, and by meeting enrollment requirements. Please contact the Office of International Education via email at international@uta.edu if you have questions regarding your visa or immigration status. You may request a call for advising by following the instructions found here.</p>
<p>How does a move to online classes impact international students with F-1 visas whose instruction must occur in person?</p>	<p>UTA adheres to the guidance from the Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), which is a unit within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that oversees the F-1 international student visa program. Due to the rapidly evolving situation with COVID-19, SEVP issued guidance to universities that allows for increased flexibility to ensure international students can continue their academic progress. Universities can</p>

	implement temporary adjustments such as moving to online instruction without negatively impacting the immigration status of enrolled international students.
Can I return to my home country and take online classes from outside the United States until in-person instruction resumes at UTA?	The Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has confirmed that international students may temporarily take their classes online during a university's period of modified instructional format either from within the United States or outside the country.
Are international students still required to remain enrolled full-time even though classes are online for the remainder of the semester?	To maintain F-1 status, international students are required to maintain a full course load during this temporary transition to online instruction. They should not fall below the full course requirement unless they have been permitted to do so either through an approved Waiver for less than full-time enrollment or Leave of Absence (LOA) approval by UTA's Office of International Education.
The time difference in my home country will make it very difficult for me to participate in online instruction. Will my courses be recorded so I can watch them later?	Faculty should record classes and make all course materials available online so that you will be able to access them according to your time zone. We encourage you to communicate with your instructors if you need assistance with this.
What happens if I return to my home country and I am not able to return to the United States within five months? Will my Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record remain active?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has confirmed that international students may temporarily take classes online during UTA's period of modified instruction, either from within the United States or outside the country, without impacting their immigration status. • UTA will keep the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) records of those who remain enrolled full-time in active status whether they are located in the United States or outside of the country. SEVP has confirmed that since the SEVIS record will remain active, "the 5-month temporary absence provision addressed in 8 C.F. R.214.2(f)(4) will not apply." • Students who continue to make normal progress in their course of study remain eligible for admission to the United States when travel restrictions are lifted. The allowance for 100% online coursework is temporary, and it will no longer apply once the university returns to regular in-person instruction. • International students are still required to maintain a full course load during this temporary transition to online instruction. You should not fall below the full course requirement unless you have been permitted to do so either through an approved waiver for less than full-time enrollment or Leave of Absence (LOA) approved by UTA's Office of International Education.
I am a Summer 2020 incoming student. I do not know if I will be able to obtain a visa for my entry into the United States. What should I do? Will I have to defer my admission to the fall semester?	If you are unable to obtain a visa at this time, please notify your academic program as soon as possible to inquire about the possibility of deferring your enrollment to a later semester.
Do I need to take a leave of absence from UTA since I will be outside of the United States until the Fall 2020 semester?	The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) recently issued guidance to universities that allows universities to move to online instruction without negatively impacting the immigration status of enrolled international students. Students must maintain a full course load during this temporary transition to online instruction. If you are unable to maintain full-time enrollment during this period of online instruction, please review the Reduced Course Load (RCL) or Leave of Absence (LOA) sections of the Office of International Education website . For students who were enrolled fulltime for the Spring 2020 semester and plan to return for the Fall 2020 semester, summer enrollment is not required for maintaining F-1 status.
I don't know if I should return to my home country or remain in the United States. I am afraid it will affect my immigration status. What should I do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision about whether to return to your home country is a personal one and should be considered carefully, in consultation with family when possible. The university wants you to be where you will feel most comfortable. Classes will be held remotely for the remainder of the semester and possibly longer, and you will receive more information from your professors about how they will administer final exams. • The Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has confirmed that international students may temporarily take classes online during UTA's period of modified instruction, either from within the United States or outside the country, without impacting their immigration status.

<p>(Continued) I don't know if I should return to my home country or remain in the United States. I am afraid it will affect my immigration status. What should I do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTA will not take any action to end student records for individuals who remain enrolled full-time and are outside of the United States for more than five months. Students who continue to make normal progress in their course of study remain eligible for admission to the United States when travel restrictions are lifted. The allowance for 100% online coursework is temporary, and it will no longer apply once the university returns to regular in-person instruction. • International students are still required to maintain a full course load during this temporary transition to online instruction. You should not fall below the full course requirement unless you have been permitted to do so either through a Reduced Course Load (RCL) or Leave of Absence (LOA) approved by UTA's Office of International Education. • If you choose to return to your home country, please review the travel section of UTA's Office of International Education website. Please keep in mind that international travel is in a fluid state, and new travel restrictions could arise at any moment. • If you decide to travel to your home country but still need a travel signature, you may request a reprint of your I-20, and we will mail it to you either in the United States or to your home country. Travel signatures are valid for one year, so please check your current I-20 before requesting a new one. Please be aware that standard policies about academic standing still apply for travel signature requests. OIE must be able to verify that students requesting travel signatures are eligible to return for the following semester before endorsing an I-20 for travel. If you are currently subject to dismissal or on probation, you should wait for Spring grades to post to MyMav before requesting a travel signature. • Those students requiring a new I-20 for return travel to the United States should visit UTA's Office of International Education's website for instructions on the current request/ mailing process.
<p>I want to leave the United States immediately, but my I-20/DS-2019 is not endorsed for travel. What should I do?</p>	<p>An I-20/DS-2019 is not required to depart the United States. UTA's Office of International Education can mail it to you in your home country if necessary. Travel signatures are valid for one year, so please check your current I-20/DS-2019 before requesting a new one. For students on Optional Practical Training (OPT), your travel signature is valid for six months. Visit UTA's Office of International Education website for instructions on how to request a travel signature.</p>
<p>I am currently in my home country and my visa is expired, but I have a valid I-20. The embassy is now closed until further notice. What will happen if I am not able to obtain a visa to return to campus for the fall semester? Will the university provide any accommodation for me?</p>	<p>We are committed to your academic success, and we will provide ongoing support to our international students as the situation with COVID-19 continues to evolve. We are here to help.</p> <p>The U.S. Department of State is temporarily suspending routine visa services at all U.S. embassies and consulates. Embassies and consulates canceled all routine immigrant and non-immigrant visa appointments as of March 20, 2020. Visa services will resume as soon as possible, but the U.S. State Department is unable to provide a specific date at this time. Please consult with your department about your options if you are unable to return to the United States for in-person instruction once it resumes at UTA.</p> <p>If normal in-person instruction is resumed for the Fall 2020 term, then physical presence in the U.S. will be required in order to maintain F-1 status as normal. If the event that you are unable to return to UTA to resume coursework, it is important that you consult with an immigration advisor.</p>

Optional Practical Training (OPT) & Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

<p>I am graduating this semester and I need to apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT). Is it possible to apply while I am abroad?</p>	<p>You must be physically present in the U.S. at the time you apply for OPT. You can leave the U.S. while the application is pending, but this is not generally recommended. You will need a valid passport, valid F-1 visa, I-20 signed for travel within the 6-month period before return, EAD card (OPT card), and job offer letter to re-enter the United States. Please note that this will require having the EAD card shipped to you internationally.</p>
<p>I need to apply for an Optional Practical Training (OPT) STEM extension. Is it possible to apply while I am abroad?</p>	<p>As of March 13, 2020, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services has not released any changes to its existing STEM Optional Practical Training (OPT) Extension application instructions. Therefore, students must be physically present in the United States to apply for a STEM OPT Extension.</p>
<p>I am currently on Optional Practical Training (OPT), and my employer told me to work from home. Am I in violation of my immigration status?</p>	<p>Employers may ask their Optional Practical Training (OPT) employees to work from home. This will not affect their F-1 status. Students must still report their employment information to ensure they do not accrue days of unemployment in their Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record. You should update your employer address in the SEVP Student Portal to reflect your new work site location (your home address).</p>
<p>I am currently on Optional Practical Training (OPT), but I haven't found a job yet. I am nearing the end of my 90 days of unemployment, but I am unable to leave the United States. What should I do?</p>	<p>Students are required to work full-time while on Optional Practical Training (OPT). Full-time employment on OPT is defined as working a total of at least 21 hours per week. All employment must be related to a student's field of study. Students may work on a volunteer basis or as unpaid interns where this does not violate any United States labor laws.</p> <p>In the event you are unable to find paid or volunteer employment and you are nearing the 90th day of unemployment on OPT, please contact UTA's Office of International Education at international@uta.edu for consultation with an advisor.</p>
<p>I am currently on Curricular Practical Training (CPT) but am returning to my home country for the remainder of the semester. My employer is allowing me to work from home. Is this allowed?</p>	<p>Employers may ask their Curricular Practical Training (CPT) employees to work from home. This will not affect their F-1 status.</p>
<p>I mailed my Optional Practical Training (OPT) application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (UTAIS) two weeks ago, and I haven't received a receipt notice. Is UTAIS still open and processing applications? What should I do?</p>	<p>It usually takes 1-3 weeks for students to receive an I-797 receipt notice from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If you haven't already done so, please check your bank/credit card statement to verify if USCIS has withdrawn the funds from your account. This process may take slightly longer than usual due to delays in postal services.</p>

Travel

If you choose to depart from the United States, but remain enrolled full time, your SEVIS I-20 record will remain active. Please note, depending on how this situation evolves, you should check the current entry requirements of each country included on your travel itinerary. If you are graduating in May, have an OPT application pending, or other immigration application pending e.g. Reinstatement or Change of Status, **we strongly encourage you not to travel.**

It is also important to know that you **do not need a valid travel signature on your I-20 in order to leave the United States.** However, before you return to the U.S., please complete the [travel request form](#). Once your request has been approved, please complete the e-ship global form and your document will be mailed to you.

Before requesting a new travel endorsement signature, please check your most recently issued I-20. Travel signatures for current students are valid for one year. If you already have a signature that will still be valid on your planned return date, please do not request a reprint. If you are currently on OPT, the travel signature is valid for 6 months.

For additional information on the Immigration, Customs, and Enforcement response to the Coronavirus go to <https://www.ice.gov/covid19>.

If a student leaves the U.S., or is currently outside the U.S., and wants to return, will they be able to do so?	It usually takes 1-3 weeks for students to receive an I-797 receipt notice from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). If you haven't already done so, please check your bank/credit card statement to verify if USCIS has withdrawn the funds from your account. This process may take slightly longer than usual due to delays in postal services.
What if I go to my home country, on-campus classes resume, and then I can't get back to the U.S.?	As you will be maintaining your student visa status while taking your full-time on-line classes, you should be able to reenter the U.S. unless you are seeking to enter from a restricted country. This situation is constantly changing so this information may change with very little advance notice.
Instead of traveling back to my home country, may I go elsewhere in the U.S.?	Please review CDC guidance for Coronavirus and Travel within the United States here: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html
I was required to leave campus because of COVID-19. If I depart the US and my visa expires, how do I obtain a new visa to return to campus for the fall? Should I anticipate any problem?	Reach out to an OIE Advisor at international@uta.edu if you have questions about your specific concerns and an advisor will contact you regarding your options. You can also keep up with the latest information at the University's official COVID-19 web resource .
What should I do if I recently traveled to a country with a Level 3 Travel Health Notice due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?	UTA students, faculty and staff are required to report ALL personal international travel , including cruises, regardless of whether or not your destination has been designated a CDC Travel Health Notice Warning Level . Personal international travel information must be reported ASAP through the international travel form. Individuals returning to UTA from a country with a CDC Level 2 or 3 travel warning will have to self-isolate off-campus for 14 days before returning to class or work. Upon the date of return indicated in your travel submission, you will be contacted by UTA Health Services with further directions.

Health and Health Insurance

UTA continues to closely monitor the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and wants to be as helpful as possible in addressing questions about this developing situation. Please review the following information carefully to learn about healthcare options provided by UTA during the COVID-19 pandemic.

<p>Can I call someone at the health center if I think I have Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) symptoms?</p>	<p>Limited services are available at the Health Center at this time. UTA students can contact UTA Health Services with concerns during office hours at 817-272-2771. Outside of normal business hours, call the Tarrant County Public Health hotline at 817-321-5939</p> <p>If you are experiencing symptoms or have been in close contact with a COVID-19 patient, the CDC and local health authorities have advised to call your health care provider to discuss symptoms or contact history. Do not go to a clinic, UTA Health Services or other, if experiencing symptoms without first calling. In the event of an emergency, call 911 and inform the dispatcher of COVID-19 concerns.</p> <p>If you have fever and respiratory symptoms, have had recent international travel or contact with an individual known to have the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) please call before coming to the health center. Please visit the Health Services website and Student Health Insurance Page for more information.</p>
<p>Can I schedule an online doctor's appointment since campus is closed due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?</p>	<p>Health Services encourages students insured by the UT System student health insurance plan, Academic Blue with Academic Health Plans, to utilize virtual visits through MDLive. Academic Health Plans has announced that co-pays for virtual visits will be waived (normally \$20) through April 30, 2020. Please visit the Health Services website and Student Health Insurance Page for more information.</p>
<p>Can I use my student health insurance somewhere else if campus is closed due to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?</p>	<p>Academic Blue does not require prior authorization and will not apply member co-pays or deductibles for testing to diagnose COVID-19 when medically necessary and consistent with CDC guidance. For questions, students can call 1-855-267-0214 or visit: https://uta.myahpcare.com/coronavirusupdates</p> <p>An annual deductible of \$350 (in-network) \$1,050 (out-of-network) applies for treatment received at a facility other than Health Services. Use the Provider Finder Tool from Blue Cross Blue Shield to find in-network doctors and hospitals in your area. Please review the Academic Health Plan benefits page for more information.</p>
<p>What resources will the health center provide for a (COVID-19) outbreak?</p>	<p>You can see a list of all the coronavirus resources available to UTA students at UTA Health Services here: https://www.uta.edu/healthservices/</p>
<p>What should I do if I live on campus and I think I've been exposed to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?</p>	<p>If you are experiencing symptoms or have been in close contact with a COVID-19 patient, the CDC and local health authorities have advised to call your health care provider to discuss symptoms or contact history. Do not go to a clinic, UTA Health Services or other, if experiencing symptoms without first calling. In the event of an emergency, call 911 and inform the dispatcher of COVID-19 concerns. UTA students can contact UTA Health Services during office hours at 817-272-2771. Outside of normal hours, call the Tarrant County Public Health hotline at 817-321-5939.</p>
<p>What should I do if I live with someone else who might have been exposed to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?</p>	<p>If you are experiencing symptoms or have been in close contact with a COVID-19 patient, the CDC and local health authorities have advised to call your health care provider to discuss symptoms or contact history. Do not go to a clinic, UTA Health Services or other, if experiencing symptoms without first calling. In the event of an emergency, call 911 and inform the dispatcher of COVID-19 concerns. UTA students can contact UTA Health Services during office hours at 817-272-2771. Outside of normal hours, call the Tarrant County Public Health hotline at 817-321-5939.</p>
<p>What steps are the health center taking to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)?</p>	<p>UTA's top priority is to protect the health and safety of all of our students, faculty, staff and visitors during this evolving and unusual situation. UTA will continue to closely monitor the latest guidance and follow the recommendations of the UT System, CDC and U.S. Department of State. We always recommend our community members follow CDC and public health guidelines. More information can be found on the Health Services website, here: https://www.uta.edu/healthservices/.</p>