



What is SEVIS?

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is an internet-based system that allows schools, the United States of Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to exchange data on the visa status of international students. Accurate and current information is transmitted electronically throughout an F-1 or J-1 student's academic career in the United States. U.S. embassies and consulates also have access to SEVIS.

Is SEVIS new?

Yes. And no. The requirement that schools provide the federal government with information about each student's status is not new. Most of the information that will be reported to SEVIS has been required by the USCIS for many years. But the existing paper-based system precluded widespread coordination amongst schools and governmental agencies. In 1996, Congress passed legislation directing the USCIS to move to an electronic data collection system. This program would come to be known as SEVIS—the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. Technical challenges and lack of funding delayed the program for several years. However, in October 2001, Congress passed the USA Patriot Act that authorized additional SEVIS funding and required nationwide compliance by January 30, 2003. By August 1, 2003 all institution that admitted and employed F-1 and J-1 visa holders had to update their records to the bar-coded SEVIS system.

How does SEVIS work?

- After the University of California, Irvine admits an international student, SEVIS is notified and the USCIS/ICE approves the University's request to issue an I-20. The University transmits the new bar-coded I-20 form to the student.
- The student visits the U.S. consulate abroad, and the consulate confirms through SEVIS that the I-20 the student is carrying is a valid document. If everything is in order, the consulate issues the visa.
- A USCIS officer at the airport reports to SEVIS the student's entry into the U.S.
- When the student arrives on campus, he/she reports to the International Center, and the school confirms through SEVIS the student's arrival and enrollment. The University continues to provide regular electronic reports to USCIS throughout the student's academic career.
- Finally, SEVIS records the student's departure from the United States.

Information and data to be kept for F and J students:

The regulations at 8 CFR 214.3(f)(1) require that the following information be kept on each F and J student:

- Name
- Date and place of birth
- Country or citizenship
- Current address where the student and his or her dependents physically reside
- The student's current academic status
- Date of commencement of studies
- Degree program and field of study.
- Whether the student has been certified for optional practical training.
- Termination date and reason, if known.
- Documents relating to the student's admission to the school
- The number of credits completed each semester/quarter.
- A photocopy of the student's I-20 and immigration documents

Basic Concepts:

The J exchange visitor category is now a SEVIS category. That is, all exchange visitor programs must now operate within the context of the Student and Exchange Visitor information System. The J Exchange Visitor category was developed to implement the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (Fulbright-Hayes Act) of 1961.

Parties involved in the Exchange Visitor Program process:

The J Exchange Visitor Program consists of six principal parties:

- The Department of State (DOS), which issues the J visa to exchange visitors and their dependents
- Exchange visitor program sponsor, which are legal entities that have applied for and received designation from DOS.
- Responsible Officers (RO's) and Alternate Responsible Officers (ARO's), who are individuals who have been appointed by an exchange visitor program sponsor to perform duties set forth in regulations.
- Exchange Visitors, who are individuals on J-1 or J-2 visas.
- The immigration bureaus of the Department of Homeland Security, which manages SEVIS, admits alien to the United States in J exchange visitor status and which adjudicated certain immigration benefits for J exchange visitors and their dependents.
- The SEVIS database and SEVIS Help Desk



What does “fail to maintain status” mean?

Some examples of failure to maintain status include dropping from full-time to part-time enrollment without prior approval from the Designated School Official (DSO at the IC), attending a school other than the one a student is authorized to attend, failure to apply for a timely transfer or I-20 extension or change in level of study, unauthorized employment, and failure to report a change of address.

What are the consequences if a student fails to maintain status?

The student's record will be updated with SEVIS every quarter. Students who fail to maintain status lose the privileges of their student visa and become subject to deportation. Specific consequences may include denial of re-entry to the U.S., inability to move from undergraduate to graduate status, denial of requests for Optional Practical Training, denial of requests to change visa status, and possible denial of all future visa applications.

Can a student who is “out of status” regain legal status?

If a student drops below a full course of study without prior approval from the DSO, that “event” would be reported to USCIS/ICE, via SEVIS, and he or she would be out of status. The student may apply to USCIS for reinstatement if the violation resulted from circumstances beyond his or her control. Reinstatement is intended to be a rare benefit for exceptional cases. The student may not apply for reinstatement under any circumstances if he or she is out of status longer than five months. If USCIS does not reinstate the student, he or she may not appeal that decision.

What happens if UCI fails to comply with the SEVIS regulations?

The USCIS is required to audit the University's compliance with these new requirements every two years. Failure to comply with the federal regulations could result in the loss of the University's ability to accept international students and employ international scholars and researchers.

Will SEVIS benefit students in any way?

Data moves faster through an electronic system than through a paper system. Students can expect that USCIS forms will be produced faster, applications for benefits such as Practical Training will be approved more quickly, and visas will be granted without the usual long delays.

What should students do to prepare for SEVIS?

- Read any email updates from the University or the International Center. Periodically check the IC web site: <http://www.ic.uci.edu>. Changes in immigration or visa procedures sometimes happen quickly. Information is posted as soon as we have reliable facts.
- Understand the immigration regulations and learn how to maintain lawful status in the U.S., and refer any questions or problems immediately to the experts at the International Center. Do not assume that the information provided to you by well meaning friends is reliable. Please always check with the International Center.
- Be proactive. Students should plan their course schedules carefully so that they maintain full-time enrollment. Make travel arrangements early, and anticipate delays at consulates and border crossings. Keep all documents up-to-date—changes in degree level, extensions, and travel validations must be done in a timely manner and on SEVIS documents. Allow time for processing new forms. Currently visa renewals and travel outside the US may be risky.
- Feel free to come to the International Center for assistance.

Are there other resources about SEVIS?

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (*formerly known as Immigration and Naturalization Services*) has a good web site:

<http://www.immigration.gov/graphics/shared/sevis/index.htm>

If you have specific questions about your visa, please call (949) 824-7249 or you may visit the International Center at 611 Administration Building, Irvine, CA 92697-5255 between 8:00 am – 5:00 pm or send us an e-mail at intl@uci.edu. Please note that some issues may be complicated and we may need to schedule an appointment for you to discuss the immigration options in detail.

**Information subject to change. Please check USCIS web site for more immigration updates.*