

International Student FAQ's

Lone Star College recognizes that international students face uncertainty and may have questions about travel, online learning, and immigration status. There are many people available to provide advice and support. While each student's situation is unique, below are answers to common questions. For specific advice, please contact the Director of International Programs or your campus International Student Advisor. (See the full contact list below.)

This information is current as of April 1, 2020. We will continue to update this as new information becomes available. Please check back regularly for updates.

- **Is online learning allowed for F-1 and J-1 students?**

Yes, due to some temporary governmental changes in light of COVID-19, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) has announced that schools may temporarily adapt their programs and school operations to manage public health needs. Normally, international students are restricted in taking no more than one online class that can count toward their full-time enrollment requirement.

Lone Star College will notify SEVP of our need to move classes online for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester, and we will continue reporting via SEVIS for international students who are enrolled online but otherwise maintaining their immigration status and enrollment requirements.

- **I am a prospective student seeking admission to Lone Star College. Will I be able to enroll in Fall 2020?**

Lone Star College is currently accepting applications for admission to Fall 2020. Please contact the International Student Advisor at the campus you wish to attend (See below complete contact list). Also visit our webpage for more details on [international admission requirements](#).

- **If not all of the classes I was enrolled in before the COVID-19 emergency are switched to online, I may not be in 12 credit hours. Will my F-1 status be ok?**

Yes, the Department of Homeland Security has indicated that you will be excused from the full course of study requirements as a direct result of the impact from COVID-19.

- **If classes have moved online, can I travel home?**

As per the Chancellor's messages, students will be notified by April 10th regarding which classes will be moved online. Please continue to monitor updates on the [Lone Star College Website](#).

Students who wish to travel home should contact the Director of International Programs or their campus International Student Advisor ASAP.

Students should continue to monitor CDC and U.S. State Department Travel Restrictions when deciding to travel outside the U.S.

See also, [Lone Star College travel restrictions for all employees and students](#).

CDC and U.S. Department of State have issued travel restrictions. If you do leave the country, please know that you risk not being allowed to come back.

See other helpful resources:

- CDC: [Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [U.S. Department of State](#): See [top section on visas for updates](#)
- DHS: [Notices of Arrival Restrictions Due to Coronavirus](#)

▪ **Will F -1 students be able to return to the United States if they are continuing their studies outside of the country as a result of COVID-19?**

If you continue to make normal progress in your online courses from outside of the United States, you will remain eligible for admission into the United States. However, each country's travel restrictions are constantly changing. Therefore, you may not be able to exit the country where you are located, be allowed to re-enter the U.S. due to health concerns, or have access to flights due to a decrease in flight availability. Additionally, U.S. visa issuance/renewals may have been suspended beginning March 18, 2020 due to COVID safety measures at U.S. Embassies or Consulates. Refer to:

- The government of the country where you are currently located about ability to exit the country during the COVID emergency.
- Your [local U.S. embassy's website through the U.S. Department of State](#) for any updates for visa issuance/renewal updates.
- [U.S. Department of Homeland Security for current travel restrictions to the U.S. due to COVID to the U.S.](#)
- [U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\)](#) website for information about current travel restrictions to the United States.
- Additionally, Lone Star College is requiring any student and/or employee who has traveled to a country for which the CDC has issued a Level 3 or Level 2 Warning related to COVID-19 to self-quarantine for fourteen days, as recommended by the CDC. If you are returning from one of these countries, please do not come to campus until after you complete your self-quarantine. More information on [Lone Star College travel restrictions](#).

- **My sponsor is unable to financially support me due to the COVID-19 situation. Am I allowed to work off-campus?**

No. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has not authorized F-1 students to work off-campus without their authorization (based on a DHS-approved application for certain situations). Additionally, most local businesses are experiencing difficulty in hiring and employing workers given “stay at home” guidelines and would make it difficult to find a job even for students who have legal authorization to work.

- **I am expecting to graduate this Spring. Can I still apply for OPT?**

SEVIS related services are currently available. If you are eligible for OPT, please contact your International Student Advisor. Please check [OPT eligibility here](#).

An F-1 student must be present in the U.S. in order to apply for F-1 Optional Practical Training. If you plan to travel outside the U.S. after graduation, you may not be able to apply for OPT.

- **Can I still request a transfer to another school after I graduate this Spring?**

Provided your SEVIS record remains valid through spring semester, an Immigration Transfer to another school should follow normal processing requirements. If you are considering enrollment at a new school this summer or fall, please consult that school regarding their current policies and practices. Please contact your International Student Advisor to discuss your unique situation.

- **What happens if I can't connect to my online classes remotely (i.e., unreliable internet connection, time zone issues, online restrictions)? Can I choose to take a Leave of Absence instead?**

Please contact your ISA to discuss any connectivity concerns.

Students who anticipate connectivity issues abroad should consider remaining in the U.S. to participate in online classes for the remainder of the term. For students who are unable or not interested in maintaining their current course load, we believe that all academic options remain in place to withdraw from classes or declare a temporary leave.

However, failure to maintain full-time enrollment will require a termination of your SEVIS record. A new record and new I-20 may be needed before you can return. If the ability to return to the U.S. by a certain timeframe is particularly important to you, please carefully consider whether you will remain in the country for now.

- **Will I be able to return to Lone Star College for the fall semester?**

Fall registration opens on April 15th. Please see a [modified schedule for Spring 2020](#). Contact your International Student Advisor with any questions.

- **What happens if my F visa expires? Do I need to depart, or can I remain in the U.S.? Will I be able to renew my visa stamp?**

You can remain in the U.S. with an expired visa sticker in your passport as long as you are maintaining your F status and full-time enrollment. However, if you depart the U.S. and your visa has expired, you MUST renew the visa before you will be allowed to re-enter the U.S. as an F-1 student.

Currently, the U.S. Department of State has closed some consular locations and/or suspended certain visa services, and additional restrictions are possible. When visa processing resumes, there is uncertainty about processing backlogs and possible delays. If you are unable to renew the visa before you intend to return, you will not be able to travel and will have to adjust your plans. Depending on personal circumstances, some students may prefer to remain in the U.S. Each student's case is unique. To discuss your case in detail, please contact your ISA.

- **I'm currently on my OPT period. What happens if I can't report to work?**

Similar to schools having a need to shift classes online, the recent Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) announcement recognizes that workplace requirements may impact students pursuing practical training. You are recommended to consult your employer about options to maintain employment via remote work arrangements. Decisions and details on such plans should be documented as part of your immigration records, in case it is requested. Please contact your ISA if there have been any changes in your employment situation.

- **Since LSC facilities are currently closed, how can I request and receive documents?**

While our physical offices are closed, the Office of International Services staff, including your campus ISA's, are working remotely to continue providing essential services and information to the international student community. You can email your campus ISA or the Director of International Programs with your request. We will process your request and ship it to your location. **You can also call the after-hours emergency number -832-519-2929 for assistance.** All documents will be shipped using eShipglobal. Students can also provide the ISA's with a pre-paid FedEx, UPS or USPS label.

- **I do not have access to internet or phone services at home while the campus facilities are closed. What resources are available to help me?**

Several internet and phone providers are offering no cost or reduced cost services to eligible students. For more information see [Texas Education Agency's Guidance to Districts on Providing Internet to Students](#).

- **I am on schedule to graduate this Spring. Will the current situation delay my graduation?**

LSC is working on a plan to move all classes online in an effort not to disrupt student classes and progress towards graduation. All graduation ceremonies have been cancelled. Students meeting graduation requirements will still be able to earn their credentials.

- **I am having difficulty in securing food for myself and/or my family due to my sponsor's financial hardship due to COVID-19. What resources are available to help me?**

There are several local community organizations offering "drive-through" food services at no cost. See the "Food" section of [CARE for completion- Off Campus Resources](#) for more information.

- **Due to my sponsor's financial hardship as a result of COVID-19, I am unable to pay for my housing. What resources are available to help me?**

First of all, depending on the type of housing and circumstances, you may have additional time to pay. You may be protected under one of these recent legal changes:

- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has suspended any foreclosure or eviction proceedings against properties secured by Federal Housing Authority-insured Single-Family mortgages until May 17, 2020.
- The Texas Supreme Court issued an emergency order prohibiting any eviction trial, hearing, or other related proceeding until after April 19, 2020.
- All Harris County Justice of the Peace Courts have suspended all eviction proceedings until March 31, 2020.

However, evictions based on certain emergency circumstances are not included in these suspensions. If you are in need of legal advice related to your housing or need housing during this time, please see the "Housing/Financial/Legal" section of [CARE for Completion- Off-Campus-Resources](#).

Please only contact the privately-funded organizations on the list as F-1 students are not permitted to accept financial assistance from government agencies.

- **I and/or a family member am in need of medical assistance due to possible COVID-19 exposure, but have concerns due to immigration enforcement. What options do I have?**

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has indicated that “Consistent with its sensitive locations policy, during the COVID-19 crisis, ICE will not carry out enforcement operations at or near health care facilities, such as hospitals, doctors’ offices, accredited health clinics, and emergent or urgent care facilities, except in the most extraordinary of circumstances. Individuals should not avoid seeking medical care because they fear civil immigration enforcement.” See [ICE Guidance On COVID-19](#) for more information.

- **My driver’s license or State of Texas ID has expired or is about to expire. How can I renew it?**

The Texas Department of public Safety (DPS) has temporarily waived expiration dates for Driver Licenses and other forms of identification.

- **I have additional questions about how the COVID-19 situation may affect me. What resources are available?**

We have several resources available to assist you. See:

- [LSC COVID-19 Student Resources](#)
- [LSC COVID-19 FAQ](#)

- **I am stressed by the current COVID-19 situation and need someone to talk with. Whom can I contact?**

We’re here for you and have several options to assist you! You can call any, or all, of the following:

- [Your LSC International Student Advisor](#)
- [LSC Counselor](#)
- [Off-Campus Mental Health/Wellness Organization](#)

- **I have additional questions about my F-1 status, whom can I contact?**

Our International Student Advisors are here to help you by phone, email, or online appointments. See complete [contact list](#).

International Education Contact List

Location	Title	Name	Phone	Email
SO-UP	International Director	Perzen Akolawala	(832) 519-2862	Perzen.Akolwala@LoneStar.edu
Tomball	International Student Advisor	Lidia Hayhurst	(281) 401-1878	Lidia.S.Hayhurst@lonestar.edu
Kingwood	International Student Advisor	Crystal Klyng	(281) 318-4318	Crystal.Klyng@lonestar.edu
University Park	International Student Advisor	Julie La Combe	(281) 401-5362	Julie.LaCombe@lonestar.edu
Montgomery	International Student Advisor	Christine Montag	(936) 273-7642	Christine.A.Montag@lonestar.edu
North Harris	International Student Advisor	Wendy Palma	(281) 618-5581	Wendy.Palma@lonestar.edu
CyFair	International Student Advisor	Henry Phan	(832) 482-1031	henry@lonestar.edu
Fairbanks Center	International Student Advisor	Jose Vela	(832) 782-5106	Jose.Vela@lonestar.edu
SO-UP	HIE Program Manager	Blerta Banushi	(281) 290-2765	Blerta.Banushi@LoneStar.edu
SO-UP	Coordinator I	Mary Gonzales	(281) 401-5317	Mary.Gonzales@lonestar.edu
SO-UP	Associate Vice Chancellor	Dr. Katharine Caruso	(281) 618-1148	Katharine.H.Caruso@Lonestar.edu