

FAQs for International Students

In consideration of the University's plans for temporary remote learning to start the Spring 2022 semester, F-1 and J-1 students should evaluate their individual travel and study plans based on the targeted information below. Current regulatory guidance during COVID-19 relaxes many restrictions for online/remote study in accordance with this instructional plan. However, specific permissions and requirements differ between new and continuing students. **Please use the definitions below to determine your appropriate SEVIS category and then reference the relevant FAQ topics below.**

Background: Your F-1 or J-1 SEVIS category is either 'Active' or 'Initial', which may not directly mirror your academic relationship with the University of Rochester. Additionally, your SEVIS category does not necessarily reflect whether you are in the US or abroad (especially during the current vacation period). Students with a current 'Active' record are already maintaining F-1 or J-1 status. Students with a new 'Initial' record (including some students now resuming their University of Rochester studies following a break in enrollment) are due to arrive this semester under the University's immigration sponsorship and may be further categorized as a 'Transfer' or 'Change of Educational Level' record.

Please consider as follows:

- **Active (continuing):** SEVIS status for a student who is currently pursuing a US program of study and maintaining their student immigration category, which may include periods of work authorization following degree completion.
- **Initial (new):** SEVIS status for a student who will begin/resume a US program of study and is not currently maintaining a valid student immigration category while outside the country or in another US immigration category.
- **Transfer record:** SEVIS status for a student who is currently maintaining their F/J student immigration category at another US school and will transfer their record to UR's sponsorship.
- **Change of Educational Level (COEL) record:** SEVIS status for a student who is currently maintaining their F/J student immigration category at UR and will begin this semester in a new degree or program objective here.

'Active' (continuing) Students, currently maintaining their SEVIS record through UR

Can I keep my SEVIS record active and continue my studies remotely?

Yes. You can continue your studies remotely whether you are in the US or outside the US until the campus returns to in-person instruction. Based on your continued full-time enrollment, ISO will maintain your SEVIS record for the spring term. Please continue to monitor your email and the University's [COVID 19 Resource website](#). Beyond current immigration permissions, you may need to adjust your travel and/or enrollment plans over the course of the semester in accordance with evolving instructional plans at the University.

What are my options if I choose not to enroll this semester?

You will need to work with your academic program to declare a Leave of Absence (LOA) for the spring term if you will not maintain full-time study and do not pursue authorization for a [Reduced Course Load](#). This will result in a termination of your SEVIS record. If you are still present in the US, you will need to depart the country within a limited grace period. Graduate

students should contact their academic department directly. Undergraduate students in the College or ESM should work with the academic Dean's office to request a Leave of Absence.

If a Leave of Absence is granted, do I need a new I-20 to return in the fall?

Yes. As you will be out of the US for more than five months, you will need to request a new I-20 from ISO. Please visit the ISO website for details on how to request a new I-20.

'Transfer' or 'COEL' Students, transitioning their current SEVIS record to a new program at the University of Rochester

I am in the US. Can I study remotely?

Yes. You can pursue remote study to begin your new program at Rochester until the campus returns to in-person instruction, and once you have reported your [Immigration Check-In](#) to ISO so we can activate your SEVIS record. You may need to adjust your travel and/or enrollment plans over the course of the semester in accordance with evolving instructional plans at the University.

I am outside the US. Can I study remotely?

Yes. You can pursue remote study to begin your new program at Rochester from abroad until the campus returns to in-person instruction. However, ISO cannot report your enrollment to SEVIS or activate your F/J record until you arrive in the US. If you will plan to arrive later in the term, please coordinate with ISO and your academic program to update the program date(s) on your I-20 or DS-2019 in advance of your travel. You may utilize our [Virtual Drop-In Hours](#) or contact us at questions@iso.rochester.edu for an appointment with an ISO Advisor.

What are my options if I choose not to enroll this semester?

You will need to work with your academic program to determine whether a deferral or a Leave of Absence (LOA) is most appropriate for the spring term. If you will not enroll as planned, ISO will need to modify, cancel, or terminate your SEVIS record. When you are prepared to arrive in Rochester and enroll full-time in a future semester, ISO will help determine your eligibility to retain your previous SEVIS record or obtain a new one.

'Initial' (new) Students who will activate their SEVIS record upon arrival to Rochester

I am outside the US. Can I study remotely?

Yes. Most non-citizens may enroll in remote study from abroad without requiring US immigration permissions. You will need an updated I-20 or DS-2019 from ISO to facilitate your travel later in the semester for the resumption of in-person classes. You will receive a separate individualized communication from ISO with more information.

I am already in the US. Can I study remotely? Can I arrive on campus?

Please submit your [Immigration Check-In](#) to ISO *immediately* so we can activate your SEVIS record! Yes, you will be permitted to begin your studies for the Spring semester remotely in accordance with the University's instructional plan.

In the meantime, if you are in the US and not in Rochester, we recommend that you stay in your current location until the resumption of in-person classes. If you do not have alternative accommodations and you are scheduled to live on campus, the university will make accommodations and assist you with moving to your allotted housing. If you are scheduled to live in University graduate housing or off-campus, you may arrive according to your original schedule.

Travel

If I am outside the US, can I return to campus if I am unable to change my flight?

Yes. As per the university message sent on 1/6/22, international students who cannot change their travel plans may return early. The relevant portion is pasted below:

Students Unable to Delay Return to Campus

Although we strongly urge students who have not yet arrived on campus to delay their return, we recognize that some students, especially those arriving from international locations, may not be able to change their travel plans. We will accommodate students who must arrive on campus early as long as they have a negative COVID test result. Additionally, the University's [International Services Office \(ISO\)](#) stands ready to answer questions and provide additional support to international students or scholars who need assistance during this time.

Academic Options

What are my options if I choose not to enroll this semester?

You will need to work with your academic program to determine whether a deferral or a Leave of Absence (LOA) is most appropriate for the Spring term. If you will not enroll as planned, ISO will need to defer or cancel your SEVIS record. When you are prepared to arrive in Rochester and enroll full-time in a future semester, you will be asked to complete the [New Student Intake Forms](#) to obtain a new SEVIS record and I-20 or DS-2019 immigration document. If you have questions or concerns about retaining your current SEVIS record in 'Initial' status, please contact us at questions@iso.rochester.edu to schedule an appointment with an ISO Advisor.

Additional information can be found through ISO's COVID-19 Resources: [Immigration Information](#) and [FAQs](#). This is an evolving situation, and we will be updating these materials. As always, please [contact ISO](#) for additional questions that are specific to your immigration status or circumstances.