

COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for F-1 International Students

General Information for All Students

Where can I get the most up to date information about COVID-19, campus closures, virtual learning, and my status as an F-1 international student?

Please check your email regularly as we will continue to send you important updates and instructions. You can also monitor the following websites:

<https://foothill.edu/virtualcampus/>
<https://www.foothill.edu/healthservices/corona-virus.html>
<https://www.foothill.edu/international/covid-19%20updates.html>

Will classes return to campus for Fall 2021?

Approximately 30% of classes will be back in-person for fall. International students will have both a large online/virtual schedule and a more robust in-person and hybrid schedule to choose from based on their preferences and ability to come to the U.S. Please see following link below for the official proposed college-wide return to campus plan. Planning around COVID-19 public health guidelines is complex. This plan is still evolving and is subject to change: <https://foothill.edu/return/>

Do I need to be vaccinated against COVID-19 to return to campus?

We anticipate that a mandatory vaccination policy will be put in place by the college starting September 20. Therefore, we strongly recommend that all students get the COVID-19 vaccination in order to be eligible to attend on-campus classes and access in-person services.

- Acceptable COVID-19 vaccines are approved by the [FDA](#) or the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) (including Astra Zeneca, SinoPharm BIBP, Serum Institute of India, etc.).
- New students: We encourage you to get vaccinated before coming to the U.S. and carry proof of vaccination with you to the U.S. If that is not possible, the COVID-19 vaccine is widely available here and you should plan to get vaccinated as soon as possible after arrival.
- Are you under 18 years old? If so, you may need a parental consent form to receive a COVID-19 vaccination in the U.S. You can find more information [here](#).
- There will be some exemptions allowed for medical or religious reasons. Medical reasons will need documentation from a doctor and need to be translated to English. More information about exemptions is expected to be posted in the coming weeks.
- If you do not want to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and if you are not eligible for an exemption, you have the option to study with us online outside the U.S.

Is the International Student Programs (ISP) office currently open?

Yes. The ISP office is open throughout the summer, but we are continuing to offer all services virtually until further notice. Our staff is working remotely and will continue to hold virtual advising hours and respond to your inquiries via email :

Current/Continuing Foothill students: fhinternational@fhda.edu

Applicants/Incoming Foothill students: fhintladmissions@fhda.edu

If you have a specific question for our Immigration Advisor or International Counselors, you can reach out to them directly as well. Please be patient with email responses due to a high volume of email inquiries.

How do I contact my instructors if I have a question?

Contact information for instructors is found in your course syllabus. There is also a faculty directory available on the website: <https://foothill.edu/directory/>

How will I know how my online classes will be structured?

We highly recommend that all students review course descriptions when selecting and enrolling in online courses. Some courses may still have designated virtual meeting days/times, so you need to consider if these courses will work for your schedule, especially if you are studying outside of the U.S.

Once you register and begin your course, you should review the syllabus to get more information about course requirements, assignments, and expectations. If you have further questions, please contact your professor directly.

Will the required course books for online courses be electronic? What if I need a physical book(s)?

Most required books have e-book versions available for purchase online from various sources. Information about required textbooks can be found in the syllabus of each course. If you have a question about course materials or requirements, please contact your professor directly.

Why is the cost for tuition the same for in-person and online classes?

Many factors are taken into consideration when calculating tuition and fees, including our ability to offer access to leading faculty and educational resources. Tuition and fees also help us provide student support services such as tutoring, counseling, and International Student Programs, all while ensuring that your courses are transferable no matter how they're delivered. Additionally, these fees are required to be set by local governing boards in accordance with very prescriptive Education Code requirements, including minimum nonresident tuition fee levels that must be charged. There will be no changes or reduction of our tuition or fees based on the instructional method. International students will continue to receive a high quality, affordable education from one of the top community college Districts in California.

Are online courses still transferrable to 4-year universities?

Academic online courses are reviewed the same as in-person courses for transfer to the University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and many other 4-year institutions. If you have further questions, please discuss your education and transfer plan with an international counselor.

I've never taken a fully online course. Are there any resources if I have questions?

Yes. You might find the information on the [Online Learning Resource Hub for Students](#) helpful. On this page, you will find live tech support, tips for using Canvas and Zoom, and more.

Are online courses accessible for students with learning differences? Can I still get support services?

Yes. Foothill's Disability Resource Center is still offering accommodations and support services for students online. To learn more and to request assistance, please visit the [Disability Resource Center's](#) website.

Does my international health insurance cover the cost of COVID-19 testing? What about treatment if I get sick?

Yes. Health insurance through Foothill College is mandatory for all international students who are studying inside the US with an F-1 visa. This insurance covers the cost of COVID-19 testing (if your primary physician refers you to get tested) as well as treatment for F-1 students. COVID-19 testing for travel is not covered. If you have any further questions about health insurance coverage, please contact Mang-Ling Cho at chomangling@fhda.edu.

If you have a health emergency within the U.S., please dial 911.

Does my international health insurance cover COVID-19 vaccines?

COVID-19 vaccines are currently being provided free of charge through local government vaccination sites. You may visit this website to determine your eligibility and to sign up for a vaccination appointment when you are eligible: <https://covid19.ca.gov/vaccines/>. Note that vaccinations are *not* covered through your international student health insurance. Many vaccine sites are offering the COVID-19 vaccine for free, but some may charge administrative or other nominal fees.

If I am not studying in the U.S., do I still need to pay for health insurance?

No. If you are taking classes online, outside the U.S., you will not be responsible for our health insurance fees. The health insurance is only mandatory for students who are physically in the U.S. If you have questions about health insurance, please contact Mang-Ling Cho at chomangling@fhda.edu.

New/Incoming Students

When can I arrive in the U.S. for Fall 2021?

With a fall I-20 and valid F-1 visa, most students may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the program start date printed on their I-20. However, due to a [recent policy from the U.S. Department of State](#), F-1 students coming from Brazil, China, India, Iran, and South Africa may ONLY enter the U.S. up to 30 days prior to the first day of classes, September 20th. Therefore, students from these countries may only enter the U.S. after August 21, even if the program start date on the I-20 is earlier than September 20. All students must arrive before the start of classes on September 20.

If I am able to get an F-1 visa and travel to the U.S. for Fall 2021, will I be required to take in-person classes?

Per current immigration regulations, F-1 students entering the U.S. with an initial I-20 must enroll in at least one hybrid or in-person class. Reminders about this requirement will be sent by email before and after your fall quarter registration opens.

I started my studies online from my home country. Do I need an updated I-20 to apply for a visa and/or enter the US for Fall 2021?

Yes, you need to request an updated I-20 with program dates that match the quarter you intend to enter the U.S. Email the International Admissions office at fhintladmissions@fhda.edu to request an updated I-20 before making your visa appointment, or if you already have a valid visa, before you travel.

I'm admitted, but I'm not sure if I can get a visa appointment in time to arrive for my first quarter. Can I study online from my home country?

Yes. We understand that many consulates around the world remain closed/limited in services. You can begin your studies online from outside the U.S. and join us in-person for a future quarter.

If I begin my studies outside the U.S., what does that mean for my I-20 and F-1 status?

While you will still be a Foothill College student, if you are unable to obtain a visa and enter the U.S. to activate your record with ISP, you will not be in F-1 status. You will need to request an updated I-20 for the next available term that you wish to attempt entry to the U.S. later.

If I obtain my visa and then decide to study from my home country, will my visa be cancelled?

Your visa in your passport will not be canceled if you decide to study from your home country. You will be able to use it to enter the U.S. for a future quarter if you request and receive an updated I-20 document with the correct program dates before you travel. Email the International Admissions office at fhintladmissions@fhda.edu to request an updated I-20 as soon as you know you will not be able to arrive for the quarter you originally applied.

If I paid the SEVIS fee and cannot get a visa appointment, will I be refunded the fee?

The I-901 SEVIS fee is not refundable; however, if you defer your admission, and promptly request an updated I-20 as soon as you are able, then you can keep the same SEVIS ID number and your SEVIS fee will be applied to the new term. Email the International Admissions office at fhintladmissions@fhda.edu to request an updated I-20 as soon as you know you will not be able to arrive for the quarter you originally applied.

How will you send me the new I-20?

SEVP guidance allowing electronic signatures on I-20s has not changes, so we are continuing to send electronic signed I-20s via email directly to the student until further notice.

How does the 5-month rule apply to F-1 international students who are transferring from another SEVIS-approved school?

According to the July 15 FAQ, the five-month rule related to transfer students will not apply to students affected by COVID-19. SEVIS transfer students who exceed the 5-month period should contact the Foothill ISP office at: fhintladmissions@fhda.edu first. Depending on the circumstances, the international student adviser may have to request a data fix of their record from SEVP.

If I am able to get a visa appointment and receive my visa after the quarter starts, can I start the quarter online and then come in person later during the quarter?

No, students with an initial I-20 must enter the U.S. before the first day of the quarter, which is printed on your I-20. If you cannot get your visa and enter the U.S. before your program start date, you will need to wait until the next available quarter; however, you can complete your courses virtually from outside the U.S. until you are able to travel.

I'm a transfer student to Foothill College and plan on studying from my home country; how is my status affected?

Transfer students who are not present inside the U.S. at the start of their initial quarter may have their SEVIS record transferred to Foothill, but they are not eligible to be activated, so their I-20 will remain in Initial Status and they will not be subject to F-1 regulations while abroad. **When the student is ready to return to the US for the next available quarter** the student must contact the ISP (International Student Programs) office at: fhintladmissions@fhda.edu in advance and, depending on the circumstances, the ISP office may have to request a data fix of student's record from SEVP and issue a new I-20.

Do I need to attend the virtual orientation events?

Yes, there will be a several virtual orientation events, including Registration Workshops, in advance of your registration date. These are extremely useful events to help prepare you for class registration and connect you with counseling and other campus services. There will also be a mandatory F-1 student check-in 1-2 weeks before the start of classes. During this event, we will share important information about student health insurance, immigration regulations, and ISP services. The F-1 student check-in is critical for all new students who are inside the U.S. to have their SEVIS records activated.

What's the next available quarter after Fall 2021?

The next available quarters are Winter 2022 and Spring 2022. Winter 2022 courses start in January 2022 and Spring 2022 courses begin in April 2022. For more information on quarter start times and deadlines, please check our [academic calendar](#).

How will I complete my math and/or English placement test?

Math, English, and ESL assessments are offered online. Admitted students will receive instructions on how to complete the assessments remotely in advance of their registration date. We urge admitted students to check their emails regularly and read each email thoroughly.

I have been admitted, but I want to defer my admission to a later quarter. What do I have to do?

Please contact our Admission Advisor at: fhintladmissions@fhda.edu if you wish to defer your admission. Please include your full name and CWID and the specific quarter that you wish to defer to. There is no fee to defer your first time, but subsequent deferral requests may incur a new application fee and, if physical mailing of I-20 documents resumes, you may be charged a \$75 shipping fee to mail your updated I-20 overseas.

Current/Continuing International Students

Can I remain in my home country and take all online classes for the Fall 2021 quarter?

Per the most recent federal regulations, continuing students can take classes in the U.S. or from overseas while maintaining F-1 visa status. You should continue to enroll in 12 units per quarter.

I am in the U.S. for summer quarter. Can I travel outside the U.S. over the summer break and come back to the U.S. to start the fall quarter?

Yes, you may travel outside the U.S. Please ensure that your I-20 has a valid travel signature or be prepared to request an I-515A at the airport if needed. Please be aware that even with a valid F-1 visa, international travel back to the U.S. may continue to be restricted and you are travelling at your own risk. Immigration, travel, and health screening policies may change without notice. Please visit the [CDC website](#) for the most up to date information regarding COVID-19 and travel restrictions.

What is an NIE (National Interest Exception) and what does it mean for me returning to the U.S. for fall?

This refers to a [recent policy from the U.S. Department of State](#) concerning students from Brazil, China, India, Iran, and South Africa. F-1 students are eligible for NIEs (National Interest Exceptions) for travel and can return to the U.S. for fall quarter but must not return more than 30 days before the start of classes. If you are residing in China, Iran, India, Brazil, South Africa, you must return to the U.S. between 8/21/2021 – 9/19/2021. It is important to reach out to your embassy and pay close attention to changes with your airline.

As a reminder, all ACTIVE students planning to return must have the following documents:

- Passport valid 6 months into the future
- Visa which has not expired
- I-20 with travel signature dated within 12 months.
- A negative COVID test within 3 days of entry to US
- Proof of COVID-19 vaccination (*recommended*- please check your email for updates regarding current vaccination recommendations at Foothill)

I need a travel signature on my I-20 signature. What do I do?

If you have a signature on Page 2 of your I-20 that is dated within the last 12 months, you can travel with the current signature.

If you do not have a current signature on your I-20, email Merry Quittner at quittnermerry@fhda.edu to request an electronic signature on your I-20 up to one month before you are scheduled to return to the U.S. To request a travel signature, please email the following information:

1. Passport name
2. CWID or student ID number
3. Birthdate and/or SEVIS ID number
4. Subject: I-20 travel signature
5. The date you plan to return to the U.S.

During the COVID-19 pandemic only, international students are permitted to travel using electronic signatures on their I-20s, which can be scanned or digitally produced signatures.

Can I complete the Fall 2021 quarter virtually from outside the United States?

Per the most recent federal regulations, you can choose to complete Fall 2021 online from outside the U.S. Please keep the following in mind:

- You will remain in F-1 status only if you register for and complete a minimum of 12 units for the spring quarter. You can choose to register for as many online courses as you'd like, but when selecting courses, we recommend that you select classes that do not have a meeting day/time in the course description to avoid time zone issues.

- Please ensure that you will have regular access to a computing device and a reliable internet connection.

I took an authorized leave of absence for Spring 2021, but I may decide not to return since many classes will remain online for Fall 2021. How will this affect my status?

If you requested an official Leave of Absence from the Immigration Advisor, you are permitted to leave the U.S. for one quarter only. If you decide not to return to the U.S. the following quarter (excluding summer quarter), you can continue your studies online from abroad, but if you want to come back to the U.S. for a future term, you will need to contact the Immigration Advisor to discuss your options for re-applying to the college.

Can I take off the Summer and Fall 2021 quarters and continue my studies in a later quarter?

Summer is an optional quarter, so you may choose not to enroll in any classes with no consequence. However, if you wish to skip the fall, winter, or spring quarter entirely (not take any classes either in the U.S. or abroad), please contact the immigration advisor to request a Leave of Absence: Stephanie Gross, grossstephanie@fhda.edu

How do I access services such as counseling, immigration advising, etc.?

Student Services will be available virtually, including counseling and immigration advising. Please see below for more information about whom to contact with questions or to schedule a virtual appointment.

Immigration Advising:

Stephanie Gross grossstephanie@fhda.edu

International Counseling:

Set an appointment through counseling: <https://www.foothill.edu/counseling/>