

# 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>

### **Is the campus closed?**

Yes. Foothill College campus is currently closed per the Santa Clara County Shelter in Place order. Courses and services will continue to be offered remotely.

### **Is the winter 2021 quarter going to be online? How about the spring 2021 quarter?**

Yes, as with fall 2020, most of our winter 2021 quarter and spring 2021 quarter courses will be delivered virtually with a limited exception for a select number of lab courses and hybrid courses for specific allied health programs.

### **Is the International Student Programs (ISP) office still open?**

Yes. The ISP office is currently offering all services virtually. Our staff is working remotely and will continue to respond to your inquiries via email:

*Current/Continuing Foothill students:* [fhinternational@fhda.edu](mailto:fhinternational@fhda.edu)

*Applicants/Incoming Foothill students:* [fhintladmissions@fhda.edu](mailto: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 professors 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 be electronic too? 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.

**If classes are online, why do I still have to pay the same cost for tuition?**

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 as well as treatment for F-1 students. If you have any further questions about health insurance coverage, please contact Mang-Ling Cho at [chomangling@fhda.edu](mailto:chomangling@fhda.edu).

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

**If I am not 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](mailto:chomangling@fhda.edu).

## New/Incoming Winter 2021 Students

### **I have obtained my F-1 visa and plan on traveling to the U.S. for Winter 2021. How will I be affected by the newly released SEVP guidance?**

Students who wish to attempt entry into the U.S. for Winter 2021 (whether they started studies online from abroad in fall or not) should be aware that they are travelling at their own risk, and we cannot predict their reception by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Per the most recent U.S government guidance, new F-1 students entering the U.S. to begin their studies need to enroll in a hybrid program of study. We will provide more information on hybrid course option(s) as the Winter 2021 term approaches; however, the hybrid course options will be limited, and you should expect most of your classes to be held online. It is critical that any student who obtains an F-1 visa and plan to travel to the U.S. communicate with the International Admissions office as soon as you have your travel itinerary to ensure the best possible chance of admission at the port of entry.

Finally, due to the COVID pandemic, the U.S. government has imposed travel restrictions on individuals coming from certain countries. As you make your fall plans please continue to check both the [CDC website](#) and the [U.S. Department of State website](#) for travel restrictions and other updates. Please note that the rules and restrictions around COVID and travel are dynamic and may change.

### **I started my studies online from my home country in Fall 2020. Do I need an updated I-20 to apply for a visa and/or enter the US for Winter 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](mailto:fhintladmissions@fhda.edu) to request an updated I-20 before making your visa appointment.

### **I'm admitted, but the consulate in my country is closed, and I can't get a visa. Can I study online from my home country?**

Yes. We understand that many consulates around the world remain closed. Since we are offering courses and services remotely, you can begin your studies outside the U.S. Once the consulates and campuses reopen, you can choose to 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.

### **If I obtain my visa and 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 the spring quarter if you request and receive an updated I-20 document with spring 2021 dates before you travel. Email the International Admissions office at [fhintladmissions@fhda.edu](mailto: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 [fhintlmissions@fhda.edu](mailto:fhintlmissions@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?**

We will continue 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: [fhintlmissions@fhda.edu](mailto:fhintlmissions@fhda.edu) first. Depending on the circumstances, the international student adviser may have to request a data fix of their record from SEVP.

**If the consulate in my city re-opens after the quarter starts and I am able to get an appointment, can I start the quarter online and then come in person later during the quarter?**

No, you 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 for the Winter 2021 quarter; how is my status affected?**

Transfer students who are not present inside the U.S. at the start of winter 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 spring 2021 quarter**, the student must contact the ISP (International Student Programs) office at: [fhintlmissions@fhda.edu](mailto:fhintlmissions@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.

**I'm a transfer student to Foothill College and I'm currently overseas but plan on returning to the U.S. before the Winter 2021 quarter begins.**

Transfer in students who will enter the US before the Winter 2021 quarter begins (January 4), **MUST** report to the ISP office to have their SEVIS record activated. Information on how to activate your SEVIS record will be sent to students via email and will be reviewed at the virtual International Student Orientation.

**Do I need to attend orientation?**

Yes, there will be a virtual orientation and an F-1 student check-in. During orientation, we will share important information that will help you to be successful at Foothill. You will learn about course registration, campus

services, counseling, ISP services, etc. 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 Winter 2021?**

The next available quarters are Spring 2021 and Fall 2021. Spring 2021 courses start in April 2021 and Fall 2021 courses begin in September. 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?**

At this time, 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 was admitted for Winter 2021, 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](mailto: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.

### **I do not want to study virtually. What can I do?**

We understand your concern. This is an unusual situation, and our staff and faculty are here to support you. We have moved our classes and services to a virtual format to ensure the health and safety of everyone. You can choose to defer your admission to a future term if you'd prefer not to study online.

## **Current/Continuing International Students**

### **I am a continuing F-1 international student. If all classes are held virtually, what does that mean for my status?**

As with Fall 2020, most courses for Winter 2021 will be held virtually (online). If you remain in good status for Fall 2020, you can continue to maintain your F-1 status as long as you register in and complete a minimum of 12 units during the winter 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. If you will be outside the U.S. for Winter 2021, look for an email from the ISP office as the winter quarter approaches to learn how to request a health insurance waiver.

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

### **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](mailto: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 winter quarter virtually from outside the United States?**

*Per the most recent federal regulations*, you can choose to complete Winter 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 'V or Z' 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 a leave of absence for Fall 2020. I have an I-20 to return to the U.S. for Winter 2021, but I may decide not to return since everything is still online. 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, 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.

### **Can I take off the winter quarter and continue my studies in a later quarter?**

If you wish to skip the winter quarter entirely (not take any classes either in the U.S. or abroad), please contact:

**Stephanie Gross**, Immigration Advisor - [grossstephanie@fhda.edu](mailto: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](mailto:grossstephanie@fhda.edu)

International Counseling:

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