

SEVP Conference Overview: SPRING/SUMMER 2015



Introduction

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will present both in-person and virtually at numerous conferences and events across the country during the Spring/Summer 2015 Conference Season, which runs from April 1 to Sept. 30. This season's presentation focuses on key program updates and hot topics, including SEVP policy guidance, updates to the Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," and upcoming enhancements to the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Additionally, this presentation highlights tips and best practices for designated school officials (DSOs) and the numerous resources available on [Study in the States](#). This executive summary highlights the key points and central themes provided in the Spring/Summer 2015 Conference Presentation.

Policy Unit and Regulatory Unit

SEVP wants your feedback on draft guidance! SEVP requests feedback on draft and interim final guidance before we finalize it to ensure a consistent interpretation among adjudicators. Policy officials review all stakeholder comments before presenting feedback to a government working group. We make adjustments where appropriate before releasing final guidance at ICE.gov/SEVP.

We would like to thank everyone who provided feedback on SEVP guidance. We received 100 stakeholder comments on the pathway programs draft guidance series and 60 comments on the definition of an academic year. We appreciate your feedback. Moving forward, we will use your comments to develop additional guidance and outreach materials for school officials.

In the coming months, SEVP expects to release the following guidance for comment on Study in the States:

- Student employment (on-campus employment, off-campus employment, student internships with an international organization and student emergent circumstances for F-1 students, as well as general employment for F-1 and M-1 students);
- F-1 student absence, school breaks and annual vacation;
- M-1 student absence and school breaks.

SEVP posts guidance to Study in the States for a 45-day comment period. For more information on the different types of guidance, the process to comment on draft guidance and to register to receive alerts about upcoming guidance for comment, please visit our Study in the States [SEVP Guidance for Comment](#) page.

REGULATORY UPDATES

SEVP anticipates that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will amend its regulations to improve management of international student programs and increase opportunities for study by spouses and children of international students.

Under the anticipated new regulations, SEVP-certified schools will have greater flexibility to determine how many DSOs to nominate. Currently, SEVP-certified schools can nominate a maximum of 10 DSOs. The new regulations will permit SEVP-certified schools to nominate an appropriate number of school officials based on the school's specific needs.

Additionally, the new rule will permit dependents of international students to enroll in educational courses while in the United States, as long as the courses do not equate to full time study.

News from the School Certification Unit

The SEVP School Certification Unit is currently working on Form I-17 update submissions from October and November 2014. Due to the number of petition updates submitted daily, the average timeframe for adjudication of Form I-17 updates is at least 60 days and may take longer depending on the nature of the requested update.

As part of a continuing series, SEVP wants to remind school officials of tips and best practices to keep in mind when planning and making updates to the Form I-17:

1. **Keep your Form I-17 up-to-date** – We strongly recommend that school officials review their school’s Form I-17 on a regular basis and submit updates as needed. Regular updates to the Form I-17 — as opposed to updates made prior to recertification — will ensure accurate and timely processing, as well as make the recertification process easier for you and your school.
2. **Keep important dates in mind** – School officials should remember that all changes to the Form I-17 must be adjudicated prior to filing for recertification. Therefore, we recommend that school officials always keep important dates in mind, such as the school’s certification expiration date, when planning to submit an update.
3. **Check your email address in SEVIS** – School officials should ensure that the principal designated school official’s (PDSO) email address listed in SEVIS is current so that the school can continue to receive notifications and requests for evidence from SEVP.
4. **Know who to contact** – For questions concerning updates, contact the SEVP Response Center (SRC) by phone at 703-603-3400 or by email at SEVP@ice.dhs.gov.

SEVIS Enhancements

SEVP is working diligently to develop and release new SEVIS enhancements. In the coming year, SEVP plans to deploy multiple new enhancements within the current system. Beginning on April 5, 2015, DSOs and government users will be able to access a new student employment information page, which will display all employment authorizations granted for a student under a specific SEVIS ID.

SEVP is planning another release for summer 2015 that will implement new standards for nonimmigrant names, U.S. street and email addresses, introduce a SEVIS Download Page and update the Form I-20, “Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status” and Form DS-2019, “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status.” Once implemented, SEVIS will automatically convert existing nonimmigrant student names to the new standards and validate all U.S. street and email addresses to ensure they are complete and legitimate.

SEVP and the U.S. Department of State will also change the Form I-20 and Form DS-2019 to accommodate the new name standards in SEVIS. The Form I-20 will have a completely new look — DHS branding will appear on the form, but the bar code or area for port-of-entry stamp will be removed. The U.S. Department of State will make minor changes to the Form DS-2019 to include additional name fields.



SEVIS Resources

In addition to these enhancements, SEVP developed a robust communication program to keep stakeholders informed of SEVIS enhancements before, during and after each release. To communicate upcoming features, SEVP hosts a free webinar series to explain and

demonstrate new features. These webinars also allow SEVIS users to ask questions about upcoming system changes through a moderated question and answer session. DSOs can also access job aids and fact sheets through the [SEVIS](#) page on Study in the States.

News from the SRC and SEVIS Help Desk

To enhance customer support and better address stakeholder questions, the SRC and SEVIS Help Desk merged support functions into a single location in the Washington, D.C. area. The SRC and SEVIS Help Desk are fully committed to answering stakeholder questions and appreciate your patience during this transition. Recently, we experienced a higher than normal call volume and stakeholders may have faced extended wait times due to the response center merge. We would like to thank stakeholders for their patience during this transition and remind stakeholders to review resources available on [Study in the States](#) and [ICE.gov/SEVP](#) for answers to frequently asked questions.

The SRC and the SEVIS Help Desk permanently extended their hours from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET to support stakeholder inquiries. For questions related to policy and regulation, please contact the SEVP Response Center by phone at 703-603-3400 or by email at SEVP@ice.dhs.gov.

If you need assistance with SEVIS passwords or technical assistance, call the SEVIS Help Desk at 800-892-4829 or email SEVISHelpdesk@ice.dhs.gov.

SEVP Field Representatives

SEVP trained and deployed the first and second classes of field representatives in 2014. Since deployment, field representatives have conducted over 4,000 school visits and enhanced relationships with DSOs within their respective territories. We are pleased to report that the first two classes of field representatives received positive feedback from the academic community. An initial survey showed that the first and second classes received the highest overall rating of “Achieves Excellence” for their professionalism, punctuality and courtesy demonstrated throughout their school visits.

SEVP posted hiring announcements for the third class of field representatives in February 2015. We expect this class to begin their training at SEVP headquarters in late summer and deploy to their respective territories in fall 2015. SEVP expects to hire the fourth class of field representatives in 2015 and will continue to communicate with the academic community to provide information on field representative hiring and deployment.

Study in the States as a Tool for School Officials

Since its launch in 2011, [Study in the States](#) has established itself as a hub of official government information for school officials and nonimmigrant students interested in the international student process. As of April 2015, Study in the States has reached more than one million users from 229 countries and territories, and has received more than 3.5 million page views.

Study in the States offers school officials numerous free resources that address the international student process and SEVP certification. Examples of resources available on Study in the States include:

- **SEVIS Resources**

SEVIS resources available on Study in the States include fact sheets, FAQ documents and information concerning upcoming releases, as well as webinars to assist DSOs with SEVIS reporting requirements. You can access these resources through the [SEVIS](#) page.

- **Topic-specific Webinars**

In 2015, SEVP will host a series of topic-specific webinars on Study in the States. This webinar series will allow stakeholders to learn more about key areas of interest, such as the DHS regulatory framework. These webinars will also allow viewers to engage directly with SEVP through a question and answer session. Be sure to watch Study in the States, Facebook, and Twitter for more information about this upcoming webinar series.

- **Tutorials and Videos**

Study in the States contains videos designed to help school officials learn more about SEVP, and tutorials on topics such as how to navigate the Form I-17 and SEVIS I-901 fee payment process.

Study in the States also offers many resources for international students and their parents. Using the translation feature, students and their families can view Study in the States content in 64 languages. Whether a student is looking to study in the United States or is completing a program of study, Study in the States provides helpful tools such as:

- **Study Guide to the States**

We recently updated the [Study Guide to the States](#) to provide an interactive resource that helps students and school officials navigate the international student process, from searching for an SEVP-certified school to completing a program of study. The guide provides links to detailed information at each step in the process. In addition to updated information, the Study Guide to the States can be viewed on a smartphone or tablet.

- **Find SEVP-certified Schools**

The [School Search](#) page allows students to search for SEVP-certified schools by name, location, state and education or visa type. Students can use the new, interactive map to locate SEVP-certified schools and view their physical location within the United States.



Compliance

SEVP would like to remind DSOs of best practices when a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer issues a Form I-515A, “Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor,” to a student at a U.S. port of entry. DSOs should ensure the student files the required documentation within 30 days of receipt and submits all relevant information in one package to SEVP. As a reminder, the package must contain the following items:

- The Form I-515A, “Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor;”
- The student’s Form I-20, “Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status,” or Form DS-2019, “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status,” with original signatures;
- The number on the student’s Form I-94, “Arrival/Departure Record,” or a printed copy;
- A copy of the admissions stamp from CBP; and
- The student’s I-901 SEVIS fee receipt.

If the student chooses to go to a CBP-deferred inspection site instead of sending the Form I-515A paperwork to SEVP, please email SEVP@ice.dhs.gov with the student’s Form I-94 number and indicate the length of nonimmigrant status granted to the student at the deferred inspection site.

Engage with SEVP

We encourage you to connect virtually with SEVP and stay up-to-date with the latest program news and updates, as well as engage with us through social media. SEVP’s [blog](#) adds new posts daily with information about best practices and current events, answers to frequently asked questions and other topics related to international education.

Additionally, SEVP is a monthly contributor to the U.S. News and World Report’s “International Student Counsel” blog. SEVP Director Lou Farrell writes a blog post focusing on aspects of the international student process, such as transferring schools and financial obligations. The blog is available on the [U.S. News and World Report’s website](#). We encourage you to share Director Farrell’s latest blog posts through your personal social media networks.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR PUBLICATIONS

To further engage with our stakeholders, SEVP publishes the quarterly SEVP Spotlight and the monthly SEVP Conference Bulletin. If you are interested in subscribing to either publication, please email SEVPCommunications@ice.dhs.gov and we will add you to our distribution list.

SEVP Spotlight

The SEVP Spotlight is a quarterly newsletter distributed to more than 35,000 DSOs, as well as top academic associations and SEVP’s government partners. Each newsletter provides updates on the latest information affecting our stakeholders and the program.

SEVP Conference Bulletin

The SEVP Conference Bulletin is a monthly one-page bulletin that informs our conference stakeholders of the latest SEVP news and events. Past Conference Bulletin topics included seasonal tips and reminders for DSOs, news on the latest SEVP publications, as well as updates on SEVP’s participation at stakeholder conferences and events.

ENGAGE THROUGH CONFERENCES

SEVP is constantly expanding our outreach through stakeholder conferences and events, and welcomes the opportunity to participate in your conference or event. To inquire about SEVP attending your upcoming conference or event, submit a request that includes event details to SEVPOutreach@ice.dhs.gov.

We want to hear feedback about the Spring/Summer 2015 Conference Presentation! Provide your feedback through the brief [Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey](#). We review your comments throughout the year and incorporate your thoughts into future presentations. Your opinion is vital to SEVP continuing to meet your needs.