



Top 10 Questions for Designated School Officials (DSOs) at Kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) Schools

Note: This document pertains to F-1 international students enrolled in Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified schools at the K-12 level. The document provides answers that interpret U.S. government regulation, but does not serve as a replacement for federal regulations or official SEVP policy guidance. Questions have been edited for grammar and style.

- 1. On the Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," does the program end date refer to the date the student is scheduled to graduate or the end of the current semester or year? How do DSOs notify SEVP about a student's graduation through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)?**
 - A. The program end date refers to the expected completion date of a student's academic program. Therefore, DSOs should enter a student's expected graduation date as the program end date on the Form I-20. DSOs should enter the expected last day of study at the school.

- 2. Can SEVP clarify the statement that "third parties may not issue or keep the Form I-20"? Additionally, after sending the Form I-20 to the student or a parent, can a DSO send a copy of the Form I-20 to a third party agency?**
 - A. Federal regulation at 8 CFR 214.3(k) states that "only a DSO of an SEVP-certified school may issue a Form I-20 to a prospective or continuing nonimmigrant student, or an accompanying dependent." Consequently, a third party may not issue the Form I-20 to the student.

In general, SEVP recommends that students maintain control of all their personal documents, including the Form I-20, I-901 SEVIS Fee payment receipt, a printout of the Form I-94, "Arrival/Departure Record," their passport, visa and proof of finances.

If the parent/legal guardian will not be accompanying the student to the United States, SEVP recommends that control of these documents be given to the party that the parent/guardian has authorized through a power of attorney to oversee their child while in nonimmigrant status. That party may be the school, an agency or a trusted host family.



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3. Can a student travel abroad during the school year? What happens if a student needs to travel internationally to deal with a family emergency?

- A. Yes. F-1 students must receive approval from their DSO prior to international travel if they would like to continue in F-1 status. A DSO will evaluate the student's request and, if approved, will endorse the student's Form I-20 for travel by signing page two.

Students may travel *within* the United States during a school session and can attend to any emergency business, as long as they do not depart the United States and they continue to maintain student status by attending school as required. Students may also travel freely outside the United States during school breaks or the annual vacation, but must keep in mind that they need a valid student visa to re-enter.

If an F-1 student needs to leave the United States for a personal emergency during the school session for a period of 30 days or less, they should advise their DSO of their travel, whereabouts and arrangements to maintain a full course of study. A short-term absence does not require any action in SEVIS.

If an F-1 student needs to leave the United States for a personal emergency during the school session for a period of more than 30 days but less than five months, they should first talk to their DSO to request a temporary absence. Students and DSOs can learn more about the temporary absence process and options for travel during a personal emergency through the [What Should I Do If I Need to Leave the United States Due to a Personal Emergency](#) blog post on Study in the States.

Students and DSOs can also learn more about how to prepare for domestic and international travel on [Study in the States](#).

4. If a student plans to live with their parent, relative, legal guardian or someone with a power of attorney for oversight of the student while in nonimmigrant status, is it necessary to list cost of living expenses on the student's Form I-20?

- A. The cost of living information on the Form I-20 is a compilation of school tuition, school fees and average living expenses. In the personal funding section, DSOs can list the different financial resources allowing the student to meet these costs. If a student is living with a parent, relative, legal guardian or someone with a power of attorney for oversight of the student while in nonimmigrant status, DSOs should list the full amount of tuition and living expenses under Average Costs and the financial support of the



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people with whom the student is living under Funding, Funds from another Source on the Form I-20.

However, if a student plans to live with their parent, DSOs may want to consider whether F-1 status is suitable for the student. If the student plans to live with a parent, it might be more appropriate for the student to be admitted in a dependent status derivative of the parent's immigration status.

5. Can the children of B-1 or B-2 visa holders enroll in school or do they need to apply for an F-1 visa?

A. The B nonimmigrant classification for visitors is regulated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Please contact them with this question.

6. What is the difference between a program start date and session start date?

A. The Current Session Start Date is the date the current session begins. The Initial Session Start Date (ISSD) applies to Initial students; it is the day classes will begin. The Program Start Date may be the same as the ISSD, or the Program Start Date may be as much as 30 days prior, to allow for activities such as placement examinations or orientation sessions (see 8 CFR 214.3(g)(2)(iii)(C)).

7. If a private SEVP-certified K-12 school offers a summer English as a Second Language (ESL) program that F-1 students attend before attending the private SEVP-certified K-12 school during the academic year, do these students need a different Form I-20 for the ESL program? Or, can the school issue a Form I-20 and just use the summer ESL program's start date?

A. A private SEVP-certified K-12 school may offer an ESL training program or course to Initial F-1 students as preparation (e.g., orientation or remedial ESL course) no earlier than 30 days before the program start date to students who will enroll in the K-12 curriculum at the Form I-20-issuing school without issuing a separate Form I-20 for the ESL program. DSOs must indicate on the Form I-20 that the student will be engaged in the English language training program in the remarks block of the student's SEVIS record.

If a student cannot complete an English language training program before the start of classes or if the student will transfer upon completion of the English language training program, the school should issue a separate Form I-20 for the English language training



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program. Upon completion of the ESL program, the DSO should update the student's Form I-20 with a change of educational level for the regular academic curriculum or a transfer to the new school.

For additional information about summer ESL courses, please visit the [Kindergarten to Grade 12 Private Schools page](#) on Study in the States.

8. Are DSOs at K-12 schools required to register students twice each year? How should a DSO handle registration for a school that offers three trimesters?

A. DSOs should register their F or M students for every school session their system uses while the student is in the United States and engaged in a full course of study, at least twice a year.

9. Can SEVP please explain the difference between online classes (one online class per school session) and dual enrollment in another SEVP-certified school or program?

A. For an explanation of concurrent enrollment, please see [Can F Students Enroll at Two SEVP-Certified Schools?](#) For an explanation of online classes, please see [What rules do I need to follow if I want to take an online course?](#)

10. I accidentally created a new SEVIS record for a student, recording them as a new Initial student, but they are actually a transfer-in student. How can I fix the student's record?

A. DSOs can make corrections to student SEVIS records by [contacting the SEVP Response Center \(SRC\)](#). A new SEVIS record will not become valid unless and until the student has entered the United States using the Form I-20 associated with it.