



Form I-17 Accreditations and Recognitions Conversion Webinar

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Purpose of the Form I-17 Accreditations/Recognitions Conversion

- Q: What is the purpose of the Accreditations/Recognitions Conversion Project?
A: The current Form I-17 severely limits a school’s ability to enter complete information about the accreditations, recognitions and licenses the school has.
Q: Are these fields to be used by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to investigate schools that lose accreditation?
A: It is to help us keep track of whether or not schools maintain ongoing accreditations and recognitions and remain bona fide.

Timelines and Notifications

- Q: When does the 90-day conversion period begin?
A: The 90-day conversion period starts April 19, 2014 and ends July 18, 2014.



**Q: Is this a rolling release, where some schools do this at one time, another set of schools shortly thereafter, or are all updated at once?**

A: All schools will do this during the same 90-day period.

**Q: When is the anticipated deadline for having completed the conversion?**

A: Friday, July 18, 2014.

**Q: Is there any consideration for starting the 90-day period after NAFSA so Principal Designated School Officials (PDSOs) can receive some training at the conference prior to the start of the 90-day period?**

A: No. Not everyone is able to attend NAFSA. We are doing the pre-release and post release webinars so people can receive the information they need. The NAFSA conference is before July 18, 2014 so PDSOs as well as designated school officials (DSOs) attending NAFSA will still have plenty of time to complete their conversion after returning from that conference.

**Q: From the point of submission, how long does the conversion process take?**

A: It is immediate. Once submitted, the data is recorded on the Form I-17.

**Q: Will the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) notify DSOs when we have to update the Form I-17?**

A: Yes. Every DSO at the school will be notified every time they log in to SEVIS that the conversion needs to be completed.

Once the PDSO submits the conversion, the notice will no longer display.

**Q: If I have not received any reminders when I log in, do I need to do anything?**

A: No.

## Who Must Complete this Process?

**Q: If a school does not need to change any of its basic information and if the accreditations have not changed, does the school still need to go through the conversion?**

A: Yes. All schools must go through this process. SEVP is unable to automatically move the existing information into the new fields. We are asking you to provide the same information in a new way.

**Q: If we are already certified, do I still need to do the conversion?**

A: Yes. All SEVP-certified schools must do the conversion.

**Q: Do M-1 schools also have to do the conversion?**

A: Yes. The conversion applies to all SEVP-certified schools.



**Q: If our school is not accredited, do we need to address this conversion in any way?**

A: Yes. You must complete the conversion process. If you have no accrediting agencies at all, check "None" in each section.

## General Questions

**Q: If all schools are doing the conversion at the same time, what system burden is expected and will there be better or worse times to attempt the conversion?**

A: We do not anticipate any adverse effects on system performance. We recognize that schools are busy in April and May which is why there is a 90-day window for completing this process. We do not expect that it will actually take you very long to enter the data into SEVIS. We expect that getting the start and end dates for the various accreditations might take the longest time. The Conversion Worksheet is designed to help you collect this information from other school officials.

**Q: So, we are only required to update fields 10 and 11 on the electronic Form I-17 (fields 11 and 12 on the printed version), correct?**

A: Yes. The only fields we are touching are fields 10 and 11. They will be changed to give us more precise information on the accreditations.

**Q: Can a DSO process this conversion for the school?**

A: A DSO can enter and save information on the accreditations and recognitions, but only the PDSO can submit it.

**Q: Is there a fee associated with this conversion?**

A: No. There is no fee associated with this conversion.

**Q: What is FAA Certification?**

A: Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) Certification is whenever your school is certified by the FAA to provide flight training. If you are unfamiliar with this concept, this most likely does not apply to your school.

**Q: How does the conversion process affect a school that has one Form I-17 but two campuses?**

A: The accreditation information listed on the Form I-17 applies to all campuses. The conversion covers both in one submission.

**Q: If we haven't updated our Form I-17 recently, would you recommend waiting until after the conversion has ended to do so?**

A: No. If you need to update information other than accreditations and recognitions, you should update Form I-17 now. If, however, you also need to update the accreditations and recognitions information, notify the School Certification Unit that you will be updating that information during the conversion process.

**Q: Do we have to install the 6.16 release before we begin to update the Form I-17?**



- A: Release 6.16 is an update to SEVIS itself. You do not need to install anything.
- Q: We recently added a tiny new campus with a tiny staff and are not issuing I-20s and not adding it to our Form I-17 because we do not have adequate staff there to serve international students. How will I explain that during this update?**
- A: You do not have to.
- Q: In this conversion will we be entering all majors with their Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes?**
- A: No. This conversion applies only to the school accreditations and recognitions.

## Conversion Worksheet

- Q: What is the purpose of the Conversion Worksheet?**
- A: The Conversion Worksheet is simply a tool you can choose to use to prepare for the conversion. The worksheet is an Excel spreadsheet that consists of several tabs:
- Instructions
  - Worksheet
  - Department of Education Recognized Agencies
  - SEVP-Identified Agencies
  - State-Recognized Agencies
- Q: Why doesn't the Conversion Worksheet I downloaded look at all like the example displayed during the webinar?**
- A: The Excel spreadsheet opens on the Instructions tab. The webinar displayed the Worksheet tab.
- Q: Where should the completed worksheet be sent?**
- A: You do not send the worksheet anywhere. It is intended to be a tool for you to use in preparation for the Conversion Project itself.
- Q: Where can I get the Conversion Worksheet?**
- A: The Conversion Worksheet is available on <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis>.
- Q: Will the Conversion Worksheet be updated?**
- A: Yes. As the lists of accrediting agencies are updated in response to inquiries about missing accrediting agencies, the worksheet will be updated to reflect the outcome of those inquiries.

## Lists of Accrediting Agencies

- Q: May we have access to the list of SEVP Accrediting Agencies before the release in April?**
- A: Yes. The list is available now as a tab on the Conversion Worksheet.



- Q: What is the difference between Department of Education agencies and SEVP-Identified Agencies, should they not be the same?**
- A: The Department of Education list is for recognized post-secondary education accrediting agencies. The SEVP-Identified Agency list contains agencies which primarily accredit K-12 schools. SEVP recognizes these agencies for the purposes of evidentiary requirements and compliance with the regulations that govern the certification of schools with our program.
- Q: What if our accrediting agency is on the Department of Education Agencies list but not on the SEVP-Identified Agencies list?**
- A: More than likely your agency would be in only one of them. The SEVP-Identified list applies to K-12 school. The Department of Education list applies to post-secondary institutions.
- Q: Where are the SEVP Accrediting Agencies for public universities found?**
- A: Most public universities are accredited by a Department of Education Recognized Agency. You are not required to have an accrediting agency from every list. It is permissible to indicate “none” for those that do not apply to your institution.
- Q: Is the SEVP-Identified Agencies list only for elementary private schools?**
- A: Not necessarily. However, most agencies on this list primarily accredit K-12 schools.
- Q: What if the agency is listed in both the Department of Education list and SEVP list? Should we list in both or what is most appropriate area to list?**
- A: If you are a post-secondary educational institution, list it under the Department of Education Recognized Agencies; if you are a K-12, use the SEVP-Identified Agencies list.
- Q: "Minnesota: State Board of Colleges and Universities" is listed in the "State Agencies" tab of the "Conversion Worksheet". When SEVP uses the phrase "Minnesota: State Board of Colleges and Universities," is SEVP referring to the "Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system"?**
- A: SEVP was referring to the Board of Trustees of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities and we will correct this on the spreadsheet.

## Missing Accrediting Agencies

- Q: What happens if the agency accrediting my school is not included on any of the lists provided?**
- A: Please let us know. E-mail SEVP at [SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov). This gives us

Access the list of “missing” accrediting agencies and any associated SEVP guidance in the [Accreditations Conversion Worksheet](#) on *Study in the States*.



the opportunity to review the agency and determine if it should be added to the lists or whether you should type them in under the Other Licenses and Recognitions section. Additionally, it allows us to update the Accreditations Conversion Worksheet to provide guidance to other schools also recognized by that agency.

**Q: The Illinois Department of Public Health is not on the State-Recognized Agencies list. Is there a space to add it as an additional approval?**

A: Yes. You can add it under the Other Licenses and Recognitions section.

**Q: The Licensing Commission on Medical Education is not on any of the lists. Am I missing it?**

A: It is possible that SEVP is missing it. Please e-mail [SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov) with the exact name of the accrediting agency and SEVP will look into why it is not on the lists.

**Q: The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc. (ABET) is not listed on the list in the Conversion Worksheet. Does SEVP plan to include it somewhere?**

A: If you believe an agency is missing from these lists, e-mail information about the agency to [SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov). We will review the agency and, if appropriate, add it to the correct list.

Once the list becomes final, if your agency is still missing from the various drop-down lists, you can select “other” and write it in.

## Completing the New Accreditations/Recognitions Fields

**Q: Do we need to list specific departmental/area accreditations or will one regional, all-encompassing accreditation (i.e., SACS) be sufficient?**

A: Currently our practice is that if your regional or national covers all programs of study listed on the Form I-17, you do not need to list any additional accreditations or recognitions. However, if you have a program that is not listed under a regional or national accreditation, then you would need to list both.

**Q: For clarification, do schools that offer individually accredited programs of study such as nursing, education and business really only have to list their overarching institutional accreditation such as Middle States or North Central?**

A: It depends on what your regional or national accreditation covers. If it covers all your programs of study, we will not require the additional information. However, if it does not cover the individual programs, you must list the additional accreditations if you want them to be considered as accredited programs by SEVP.

**Q: Will we be able to enter effective dates prior to the day we are entering this data?**

A: Yes.

**Q: We are a school with multiple accreditations because we have campuses in multiple**



**states. Should we list all accrediting bodies for all of our campus locations or only those for the campuses where we have a PDSO or DSO?**

A: By default, all campuses on a Form I-17 have a PDSO. Since you have multiple state recognitions, the new format will allow you to list the state recognitions for each campus. You can list as many agencies as you need. You are primarily converting the information that should have already been listed on the Form I-17 but couldn't due to the character limitation on the current field

**Q: If a school is accredited by a regional accrediting agency such as Middle States, what are the effective and expiration dates? The statement of accreditation does not list them. Is the expiration date the next periodic review date or the next self-study date? Is the effective date the "last reaffirmed" date?**

A: The effective date is the date of initial accreditation. The expiration date is the date of the next periodic review.

**Q: Must we drill down to departmental accreditations (i.e., accreditation for our school of engineering) or is this only at the institutional level?**

A: If you have institutional accreditation, that is all that is needed.

**Q: Do we need to submit school licenses for programs that are not listed on the Form I-17?**

A: No.

**Q: Will updates to accrediting agencies require follow up paperwork (i.e., copies of accreditation certificates)?**

A: Updates made during the conversion will not result in requests for supporting documentation if the accreditation information matches what is already on file with SEVP. If you update accreditation information outside of the conversion period, you will be asked to provide supporting documentation.

**Q: We are a public school district, is it reasonable that we would only have the state accreditation?**

A: Yes. Most public school districts would only have the state recognition, unless the state requires an additional recognition.

**Q: We have 37 campuses; they all have one common SEVP-Identified Accrediting Agency. However, some of the campuses are accredited also by additional agencies that are also on the list. How do we handle?**

A: If the accreditation from an SEVP-Identified Accrediting Agency covers all the program of study, you have the option to list the accrediting agencies that accredited those campuses. However, if the program of study offered at those campuses is accredited only by the other accrediting agency, you must list it.

**Q: How would a school indicate it was exempt from California Bureau of Private Post Secondary Education state licensing based on Western Area Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditation?**



A: On the State Recognitions, you would indicate that you are exempt. You would list the WASC accreditation in the appropriate section. You can also use the remarks section to communicate any unusual circumstance School Certification should know about.

**Q: Once this information is entered, do you anticipate issuing a Request for Evidence (RFE) for proof of accreditation?**

A: No. RFEs will not be generated as part of the conversion process. RFEs may still be issued as part of a regular Form I-17 update, a Recertification, or an out-of-cycle review.

**Q: If a school is recognized by its State Board of Education, but is not accredited, should the school select "none"?**

A: A non-accredited, state-recognized school would indicate the following:

- Department of Education Recognized Agencies: "None."
- SEVP-Identified Agencies: None."
- State Recognition: enter the state recognition.

**Q: How do we know that we have a complete listing of all accrediting agencies for our school?**

A: If you have a Department of Education Recognized Agency, a SEVP-Identified Agency, or a State-Recognized Agency you do not need to list any others. You must list all the accreditations that cover the programs of study you offer international students. If your school is institutionally accredited, and all programs are accredited under one agency, that is all that is required.

You may need to check with your school administration to see if your list is complete.

**Q: If a school is exempt from licensure in the District of Columbia and indicates this, should the effective date and expiration dates be left blank?**

A: Yes. You are not required to provide dates, if you indicate you are exempt from a certain type of licensure.

**Q: If our Intensive English Language Program is accredited under our Department of Education Accrediting body, do we need to show specific approval for language programs?**

A: Only if we request it from you. In this specific example, we would not require it. You can make note of it in the remarks if you want.

**Q: The 31 institutions in the MnSCU system are exempt from licensing through the Minnesota Office of Higher Education. So we would select the Minnesota Exempt selection under State Agencies on the Conversion Worksheet — right?**

A: Correct.

**Q: Our university lists Accreditations, Authorizations and Approval agencies. Will we need to enter all three of these categories in the conversion?**

A: Focus on the agencies already listed on the Form I-17 and enter their information in the





new fields. You must provide information on the accreditations/recognitions that cover the programs you offer international students.

**Q: Will "FAA" appear in a pull-down menu? If so, which one: Department of Education Agencies, SEVP-Identified Agencies or State Agencies?**

A: FAA is in its own section. You would indicate where you have Part 141 or Part 142 and give us your certification number.

**Q: My institution is affiliated with another university and now we are accredited under their regional agency. Our programs are SEVP-approved, theirs are not. What accreditation dates should we use: since they began to be accredited or since we affiliated with them?**

A: You would put in the date that your school was authorized under their accreditation.

## Effect of the Conversion on Other Types of Institutional Updates

**Q: If there are pending updates to other fields (not just fields 10 and 11), what will happen during the conversion process?**

A: Nothing will happen to pending updates in other fields of the Form I-17. They will be adjudicated following the normal SEVP processes. This conversion only affects fields 10 and 11 on the electronic Form I-17.

**Q: How does this conversion process affect a pending Redesignation application for a J program?**

A: It does not affect the J program. This conversion is only for F and M programs.

**Q: Will this conversion affect the adjudication of our Form I-17 pertaining to the addition of branch campuses?**

A: No. It will not affect a pending update to a Form I-17 to add a branch campus. If you also updated accreditation information as part of that I-17 update, only the accreditation updates are affected.

**Q: How does the conversion process affect schools whose Form I-17A is locked due to an RFE? Will the Form I-17A be unlocked for this process?**

A: The conversion process will not require you to access your I-17. Instead, you will access a specially designed screen and modal windows that allow you to update your information without actually going into the Form I-17 itself.

**Q: Our Recertification application has been pending for 2 years; will this conversion delay our approval?**

A: No. It will not affect any pending Recertification applications.

**Q: We've been in the recertification process since 2011. The last communication was an RFE in July 2012. Will we have to do anything for this conversion whenever we have a decision?**



A: No. The Conversion and Recertification processes are separate processes. You must complete the conversion process, but it will not affect any pending Recertification application.

## Effect on Day-to-Day School Operations

**Q: Can we generate I-20 forms during the conversion process?**

A: Yes. The conversion does not affect your ability to manage student or dependent records.

**Q: Will the conversion process prevent schools from updating the Form I-17 for other reasons such as adding new DSOs, etc.?**

A: No. Schools can still update the Form I-17, assuming of course that the Form I-17 is not locked because of a previously submitted update. This is a conversion process, not an adjudicated update. We did not want to adversely affect anyone with pending updates to the Form I-17.

## Accreditation/Recognition Expiration Dates and Alert Lists

**Q: If my accreditation from a state agency accrediting body doesn't have an "expiration date" how do I handle this?**

A: You have the option to designate "Not Applicable" on that.

**Q: What consequences will schools face if minor accreditations expire, such as a business school accreditation, assuming the institutional accreditation is still valid? For large schools with many program or department level accreditations, this will be a challenge to manage.**

A: If you have an over-arching institutional accreditation, you are not required to list individual departmental accreditations. However if you list departmental accrediting agencies and they expire, they do not affect your eligibility to be an SEVP-certified school.

**Q: Once we enter our expiration dates for regional accreditation, and come to that date (i.e., March 2016), what will happen? Will there be a problem with our Form I-17 once that date has passed?**

A: You are required to keep the information updated, just as you do now. If you are in the middle of a re-accreditation process, and are still in good standing with the accrediting agency, you would e-mail [update.sevis@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:update.sevis@ice.dhs.gov) to notify them that you have an expiring accreditation, but that you are in the middle of a review.

**Q: Since we will now include accreditation expiration dates on the Form I-17, will we be expected to continually update them?**

A: Yes. You will be expected to update the dates.

**Q: Will there be alerts for upcoming accreditation expiration dates?**

A: We have not yet built that into SEVIS. If you believe this will be valuable, let us know by



e-mailing [SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov).

## Pending Accreditations/Re-Accreditations

**Q: Our school is in the process of obtaining a new accreditation that we hope to complete sometime in May. Should we do our conversion in April and then submit the new accreditation in May as an update for adjudication?**

A: The timing of this is up to you. If it is going to be finalized in May, you may want to wait to include the new dates. You will have the option to use the conversion process until July 18, 2014. You must submit something by the deadline for the conversion.

**Q: My school is in the middle of re-accreditation with a site visit in March and final action expected in late spring. How will this affect us?**

A: Once the conversion deadline is announced, you may want to delay submitting your conversion until later in the 90-day conversion period so that you can enter the new dates.

**Q: Our current accreditation is expiring soon and we are in the process of extending our accreditation. Do we have to update it again after our accreditation has extended?**

A: Yes. During the conversion process, you enter the information that is true at the time of conversion. Once you are re-accredited, you would need to update your accreditation information to reflect the new dates. This update would fall under the normal I-17 update processes.

**Q: Will the school be penalized if the regional accreditation expires while this conversion is pending?**

A: No.

## Post-Conversion Issues

**Q: Will future updates accreditation dates lock the Form I-17 and prevent us from updating critical information such as programs of study or adding a DSO?**

A: After the conversion, any change to accreditation information is considered an update to the Form I-17 and subject to the existing adjudication policies and practices.

**Q: Once the PDSO submits the conversion information, will the PDSO receive notification that the conversion is complete?**

A: Yes. The PDSO will see a success message at the top of the screen. Additionally, the new information will display in the School Information and all the links and reminders regarding the conversion will disappear for all DSOs at the school.

## Planned Outreach and Support

**Q: What other outreach efforts has SEVP planned to assist schools with changes implemented in SEVIS Release 6.16?**



A: Broadcast messages will be sent and SEVP will conduct the following webinars:

- April 11, 2014: Pre-Release Webinar
- April 30, 2014: Post-Release Webinar

**Q. If we have questions about the conversion process — even non-technical questions — whom do we contact?**

A: If you have any questions whatsoever about the conversion process, e-mail [SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISTechnicalFeedback@ice.dhs.gov). The analysts monitoring that account will direct the inquiry to the appropriate people to answer the questions.