

Hello. Welcome to the virtual Q&A addressing immigration and remote learning hosted by International Student and Scholar Services.

During this FAQ, if you encounter any type of technical difficulties, please let us know in the chat function. And then if you have any questions, please use the Q&A function to post your questions and we will answer them live at the end of this session, as time permits.

So the agenda for this FAQ will be focusing on some frequently asked questions. These will be general questions that we've been receiving in ISSS and the topics that we'll be focusing on is ISSS advising, travel, immigration status, graduation, employment, health insurance, and taxes. And then at the end of this session we will have that live Q&A for you to ask questions for us to answer.

We would like to encourage you that if you do have any very specific questions to directly contact ISSS for us to help answer your specific questions for you.

So I'd like to have our presenters introduce themselves. I will go first. My name is Brandon Paulson, and I'm the assistant director in ISSS. And my name is Michael Bortscheller, and I'm the associate director of ISSS. And my name is Andrea Siebenmann, and I am one of the ISSS advisors.

Okay, so our first topic is ISSS advising.

Alright. So the questions that we have received from some students are typically about ISSS office hours. Specifically, **how can students talk with an ISSS advisor if the office is currently closed?**

I would like to mention that it's only the physical office at the University Capitol Centre that is closed. However, ISSS advisors and all of our staff, in fact, are working remotely. We are currently open Monday through Friday and we work regular hours from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and the best way to reach us would be through either email or phone and we have another slide where this information is provided. And I would like to mention also that currently, while we are working remotely, we are providing documentation that students or scholars need by mailing it to you. If anyone is in the Iowa City area, we usually use the regular, or U.S. Postal Service, mail which is currently rather slow, and it takes a minimum of 10 business days. Or, if someone needs their document very quickly, we can process express shipping for them and, for that, we use the eShipGlobal service available through iHawk. I would like to ask for the other slide.

Okay. And now we've got a few questions that are related to travel so I'll take the first one next.

So the question that we have is, **"If I go back to my home country, will I have any problem taking the rest of the Spring 2020 classes online? Can I successfully graduate?"**

Happily, I can say that the answer is you will not have any problems taking your Spring 2020 classes online. You can even graduate. Now, unfortunately, of course, we do not have an in-person commencement ceremony that you could come back to attend, but you can still graduate and complete your studies online.

One thing I want to mention before you go back to your home country, or even if you are back in your home country...it's a very good idea to download the Duo app on your phone. The reason for this is if you're in your home country and you need to log into your email or to some other

university service, it asks you for these passcodes and normally they'll text them to you or call your phone, but if you're in another country, you can't get text messages or phone calls from a U.S. number like that. However, if you have the Duo app, you'll be able to just do a push notification and authorize your login wherever you are in the world. It's the best way to log into your university services all across the globe.

Okay, I have the next question. **"Does the government still require a new signature because of Covid-19?"**

I'd like to share that there are no changes to the travel signature requirements on I-20s or DS-2019s due to the pandemic. Travel signatures from ISSS advisors are valid for one year for F1 and J1 students completing their degree program, and six months for those who have optional practical training or OPT authorization. So there haven't been any changes. So if you do have a valid travel signature and you do travel back to your home country, or you're in your home country, as long as it's valid when you return you will not need to get a new travel signature.

Question: **"What if my travel signature on page two of I-20 expires while I am in my home country? How do I get a new signature?"**

Well, there is a standard procedure that ISSS has been using with students who, when they travel and they either don't have a travel signature-- it's completely lacking--or if they, for example, lose their document or forget it when they leave the United States, we usually recommend them to contact ISSS at the ISSS email account because it is monitored daily, even during the summer break, and we will lead you through or guide you through a process where you can submit an eShipGlobal request for express shipping. That is the only way we can deliver your immigration document to your home country on an international delivery. So, that's the best way for us.

All right, so the next question is, **"My visa will expire next year in Spring 2021, so should I update it while I'm in my home country for the rest of this semester?"**

And that's a complicated question because across the world right now many visa operations have been suspended, so it would be very difficult for you to renew your visa right now, however as things improve and consulates begin to open up you could contact the consulate and ask them if you can renew your visa.

I will say most consulates will tell you, don't even come in if your visa has not already expired. So, if your visa is still valid into the future, you are fine, you do not need to renew your visa. You can request and contact the consulate but many of them will tell you if it hasn't expired yet don't even bother. Stay where you are.

Next question is: **"I'm going back home for the rest of this semester. Will I be allowed back in August?"**

So, as of now, the University of Iowa plans to resume face-to-face instruction in August if the situation has improved. ISSS believes that the travel restrictions will end and there will be opportunities to renew your visa, if you need to, at a U.S. consulate or embassy to return to study in the U.S.

The University of Iowa is continuing to monitor the situation and is focused on health and safety. So you know potentially it is possible, if the situation has not improved, if the situation has not

improved, the university may change how the classes will be held in the fall, but once again the university of Iowa is planning to resume that face to face instruction in August. Something important to note is that the University of Iowa, as well as ISSS will be in communication about any update.

Is related to fall classes or any changes look like travel restrictions and we always all communication is always sent to your University of Iowa email account.

Another question that we are receiving often is **whether student will need a new I-20 or DS-2019 when they return to school in the fall and what do they need in order to return to school?**

Well, in general, you know, you don't need a new I-20 when you try to return the school in the fall as long as you're a current student. As I was mentioning previously, only if you may lack a travel signature, or forgot or lost your document in the travel, that's when you would need a new I-20 or your DS-2019.

And to answer the second part of the question, what do you need to return to school? I would like to reference a general travel requirements. These are listed on the ISSS website on travel. And these requirements are basic, all that you need is a signed immigration document I-20 or DS-2019, with a travel signature, then you need a valid passport, and then you need a valid visa. So, again, more details on these standard requirements for returning back to school are provided on our website.

Okay, so this question obviously came from students from China, but I'm going to answer it for a lot more than just that. **"If I go back to China in the summer, do I need to buy a flight which will arrive 14 days earlier than the first day of Fall 2020 for isolation?"**

This is a complicated question because many things could possibly change between now and the start of the Fall 2020 semester. But I'm gonna answer what the situation is right now. And right now what the situation is, is that if you are an F1 student flying to the U.S. from China, Iran, the Schengen region, the United Kingdom, or Ireland. So if you're from any of those places--and the Schengen region is a large section of Europe--if you're flying from any of those places, you would have to spend 14 days in some other country before you would be allowed to enter the U.S.

So that means you can't even fly to the U.S. and just spend 14 days in quarantine here. You would actually have to make your flight for some other country first and then after 14 days come to the United States. Now that is what the situation is right this instant.

But that could change completely by the time the Fall 2020 semester comes around. And so check with ISSS as you're making your preparations. Contact us see what the latest situation is. If there are new restrictions, we will let you know. If there are no longer any restrictions, we'll also let you know. But as we are right now, yes, you would have to make your flight arrangement for some other country for 14 days before coming to the United States if you're from China, Iran, the Shengen region, the United Kingdom, or Ireland.

Another question we've been receiving is from students that are completing their program in May. And so this question is about wanting to know.....**"I want to return to my home country, but I'm concerned. I might not be able to depart the U.S. What should I do first?"**

I want to just review.

Now there is a grace period for both F1 and J1 students that are completing their program or and/or graduating so F1 students do have a 60 day grace period and J1 students have a 30-day grace period to depart the U.S. I also would like to mention that students that have graduated maybe eligible for the post-graduation employment opportunities. So for F1 students that's the optional practical training or OPT and for J1 students it's academic training, and during this time you can be applying for OPT as well as the academic training. For OPT, you can start applying 90 days before graduation and the application does need to be received by the end of that 60-day grace period.

With academic training you do need to apply and get authorization before the end of your program end date and start your employment within 30 days...during that 30-day grace period after your program end date, for those that if you're not applying for post-graduation employment or are transferring maybe to like another institution or starting a new degree program in the fall.

Then if you're having difficulties, I guess, in arranging travel outside the U.S., then our current recommendation is to be communicating with your home country's consulate and/or embassy here in the U.S. for assistance. We know that embassy consulates and embassies are working to try to support students if they're having difficulties departing the U.S.

Alright. The next question is about the concern that **if a student is trying to leave the country, whether and how in the school schedule should they set up a meeting time with the ISSS advisor to get their signature in order to travel out of the country?** Meaning out of the United States. I'm hoping that's what the question meant... hmm.

Just a reminder. Just a reminder that a travel signature is generally not needed when students are already departing the United States. The travel signature is only required for when students are returning back to United States upon their re-entry. If the student is still here in United States and then they would like to receive the travel signature before they leave, and if they have at least two weeks before departing the United States, then we would be able to help and give them the I-20 or DS 2019 with a new signature. Again, we can use either regular mail or, if they don't have that time, then they can use the eShipGlobal.

Once the student is back home in their home country again. I would like to repeat that they can contact us by emailing at ISSS email account and contact us at least four to six weeks prior to the return from their home country to the United States so that there is enough time for us to issue or to put the travel signature on a reprinted immigration document and mail it to them. So again, just to sum it up that generally students do not need travel signature to depart the United States, the only need it for re-entry.

Alright, our next questions have to do with immigration status, and the first immigration status question is, **"Is my immigration status still valid when I go home and take classes virtually or take online classes?"**

Yes is the short and simple answer. Yes, your immigration status is still valid. Of course, normally you're not allowed to take many online classes and count them towards being a full-

time student. But during this period of time when universities are dealing with the Covid 19 outbreak, the government said that they will allow students to count online classes just like in-person classes. That means that they can also be outside the U.S. taking classes and still maintain their status.

And I'll just mention I see from the Q&A, we've got some questions about scholars and will answer those at the end. So, this is for students. Other things for scholars we'll talk about at the end of the session, as well.

Another question that we've been receiving is, **"I've returned to my home country to complete the spring semester online. Do I need to update my residing address in My UI?"**

So I would like to highlight the importance of updating your residing address and My UI within 10 days of moving.

That's part of the immigration regulations. And so it is still important to be updating. I know there have been potentially some students that may have been living in the residence halls and may have moved, and that automatically, sometimes, will change back to your your home country home address. So it is important to make sure that, if you are moving at all, your residing address is up to date in My UI. You should update your residing address and it's okay to have your home country be listed if you have departed the U.S. to complete your classes this semester online.

However, it's really very important that you update your residing address in My UI when you return to the U.S. If you do not update your residing address when you return, let's say for the fall, then that could potentially impact your immigration status and you can actually lose your immigration status if you don't update that.

So it is really important to, any time you're moving, just update that address in My UI.

Okay, another question that we have been receiving is about **students being concerned that their one semester hour of cycle classes has been cancelled by the university and that they did not have any replacement classes offered. So students are now registered below full-time and wonder whether this is going to negatively affect their immigration status.**

The good news is that, no, this will not actually affect negatively your immigration status and that is because, due to the COVID-19 emergency, the U.S. government has issued a special guidance in which they stated that if a student will come under their enrollment due to classes being cancelled as a result of transitioning to online instruction, they do not need to request or receive part-time permission from ISSS. And remaining registered below full-time will not negatively affect their status. Hopefully that addresses that question.

Okay, so we've also gotten the question, **"Will all of the Summer 2020 classes also be online? What if I'm graduating this summer? I heard that I cannot only take online classes in my final semester of study?"**

So, as of this moment, the University of Iowa has said that summer classes that happen in the first half of the summer will be online. Summer classes that begin in the second half of the summer session will be in person.

Now, that's the situation right now, but as you've heard us talk about during this presentation, the university cares absolutely first and foremost about people's health and safety and so if the university determines that it cannot have in-person classes safely, then they will switch the rest of the summer to online as well.

As Brandon said, in theory, that could even happen for the fall but the plan right now is that starting in the second half of the summer classes that are in person will resume. If classes are all online for the summer, it would still be okay for you to take summer classes even if that is your final semester. Again, the government has waived the requirement for international students to only have in-person classes right now, it is possible for international students to have online classes, even if it's your final semester.

The next question is, "**Will the Fall 2020 semester start as scheduled?**" As we have been talking, this current situation is that the university is planning to resume face-to-face classes in August. There aren't any plans to start the semester later or anything related to that. The university, as Michael has shared, has this emphasis on health and safety and really making sure that that's the most important thing. And so if anything were to change again, the University of Iowa would be communicating any type of updates via University of Iowa email, so watch for that. If there were to be any type of changes it would be communicated in that way.

Next, we will be discussing a little bit or answering questions regarding....So the first question is from a **student who asks if they graduated in December and they couldn't leave the United States due to the Covid 19 outbreak, whether they could continue to stay in the United States?**

Well, assuming that the student did not apply for post-graduation training, practical training, either OPT or academic training, this would mean that they need to take really some extreme steps to depart the United States as soon as possible. We would advise to contact their home country consulate or embassy, to task for assistance with arranging the transportation to leave the United States as soon as possible.

If the student graduated in December, they only, if they were in F-1 status, they only had 60 days to remain legally in the United States which would bring them to about the middle of February. And if they are still currently in the United States, that means that the student would be accruing what is termed by the government as unauthorized presence. And accruing an unauthorized presence means that this could create serious issues for the student if they're trying to apply for a future visa to enter the United States either as a visitor or mostly as a student. So we would like to tell the student who was asking this question that it would be very important to take action right away to avoid overstaying in the United States.

Okay, so the next question is , "**Can I stay in the U.S. this summer after graduating from the University of Iowa in the spring if I plan to enter another graduate program at another university in August?**" And this is something that happens quite frequently. The answer is yes, you can stay in

the U.S. for a period of up to five months between programs.

So if your plan is simply to graduate from the University of Iowa, and do nothing else other than transfer to this other school, as long as you submit a transferring away e-form and let us know about that submission within 60 days of graduation (graduation is on May 15th), you'll have 60 days after that to get the form submitted and to let us know. But as long as you do that in a timely fashion, you could transfer to a graduate program that began as late as October.

There aren't very many graduate programs that begin in October but, theoretically, you could. Additionally, if you apply for OPT after your program, that would also give you some extended grace period before you'd have to start your new program. So the short answer to the question is yes. You can stay in the U.S. for quite a bit of time after graduating this semester if you are transferring to another program.

The next set of questions is on unemployment. And our first question is, **"Is it possible for me to do my UI on campus job from home in my home country?"**

And the answer is yes, it is possible for you to be working at a UI campus job in your home country.

It's important that you talk with your department that is employing you on campus just see if this is an option for your campus employment. It could be. It can depend on the position and if it's possible to continue that type of employment remotely back in your home country, so you would need to talk more with your department to see if this is an option for you.

Well, the next question is related to OPT. The student says that **they couldn't successfully find a job for OPT. "What should they do?"**

This assumes that the student would have graduated in December of 2019 and their OPT was approved and they are currently looking for their job. It sounds like they are not successful in their search primarily because of the current unemployment situation around the United States due to COVID-19.

But despite that our first advice would be to keep looking for the job or sending job applications. And this would be suggested for students who are currently within their 90-day unemployment period. And through the end of this period you should still continue to look for a job, even if you are receiving rejection letters. It is important that you can document that you were actively continuing to search for your job.

And if the student was also trying to depart the United States... We had a few cases of students who contacted us that they had flights scheduled but they were cancelled unilaterally. I should say by the airlines. And students are trying to book flights but it looks like they're not being very successful in getting the flights arranged before their unemployment period expires. Then again it is very important, and we advise students to document this search as well as how they're trying to look for flights and any flight cancellation information.

This will be very important for future reference even when a student is unfortunately forced to overstay because of not being able to find a OPT job and also because of their flights being

cancelled, and they are forced to stay beyond the permitted 90-day unemployment period. So it will be very important, especially when a student is trying to obtain a new visa in the future to come back to the United States and this overstay could come up in a visa interview. So it will be very important to provide this documentation and if students do have very specific situations they're advised to contact us at ISSS at this email account. Again, it's monitored daily and we would be happy to follow up with you and provide any customized information, as necessary.

Okay, so another question. **"If I'm a student on OPT and my employer has asked me to work from home, do I need to give ISSS an updated address?"** This is a great question as many people are working from home right now. One of your OPT requirements is to let us know what your employer address is.

I don't think Brandon and Andrea know this yet, but we just got updated information on this question and the government has said if you are working from home you should still provide your employer's address so the address where your employer is based the place where you would normally be if you are working in person. That is the address that you should provide when you submit your OPT reports now. As usual, though, you're still going to update us with your local address, so you'll still do that using the personal information update in the OPT forms. So you'll still give us your local address that way but, even if you're working from home, give us your employer's local address on your OPT reports.

Okay the next section is on health insurance.

Question: **"I've returned to my home country and will return to study at the University of Iowa in Fall 2020. May I temporarily cancel my University of Iowa health insurance one outside the U.S.?"** This question, in particular, is for J1 students or for anyone that's in J1 status. It is important to be maintaining your health insurance even while you're outside the U.S. That's part of the the regulations for J1 status. The university benefits office has decided to allow any international students--so this would be F1 students who will leave the U.S. due to the current Covid 19 issues -- can request to cancel their University of Iowa student health insurance while they're outside the U.S. Their insurance would end the last day of the month in which they leave the U.S. so, similar to over the summers, the university benefits office has allowed students to cancel insurance temporarily.

The same would be true right now. So there is a process to complete the insurance cancellation form online at My UI and the university benefits office has further instructions to do that specifically and you would need to upload a flight attenuation showing when you left the U.S. It will be very important to upload that in order for them to temporarily cancel your health insurance.

But I would recommend directly communicating with the university benefits office if you're an F1 student who may be eligible to temporarily cancel your health insurance.

Another question related to health insurance is from a student who is going to be graduating this spring and yet cannot travel back to their home country because of Covid 19. The question is, **"Does the University of Iowa offer health insurance coverage for after graduation?"**

Well, the good news is that this is a possibility at the University of Iowa. Specifically, the university benefits office would need to be contacted by the student if and when they're remaining in United States after graduation. I would repeat what was mentioned earlier-- that students do have, if they're in F1 status, they have a 60 day grace period and students with DS-2109 or J-1 status, they have a 30-day grace period. So if students would like to get insurance coverage during this period, they're welcome to contact the benefits office. For those students who are staying in United States and are applying for OPT, and they will be waiting for their OPT employment to start, those students are also eligible to contact the benefits office. The important piece in this is that the student, in order to qualify for this health insurance, they must contact the benefits office within 45 days of graduation. OK, so that applies to either group of students: either those who are preparing to permanently leave the United States, or those who are staying here and are waiting for their OPT to be approved, or their OPT employment to start. So, again, students need to apply and contact the benefits office to resume, or get their health insurance activated within 45 days of graduation.

And finally, we have a question about everyone's favorite topic-- taxes. And so **if somebody needs to file their taxes what help is ISSS going to provide?**

Because normally we have these wonderful VITA workshops where people are able to come in person and get all of their tax questions answered. Now, unfortunately, obviously we cannot do these sessions in person just for health and safety reasons.

But fear not. Because of the Covid-19 crisis, the tax filing deadline for your federal taxes, that's the national level taxes, have been postponed from originally it was going to be April 15th and now it has been pushed back all the way until June, sorry, July 15th. Additionally, the state of Iowa's filing deadline has been pushed back all the way to July 31st, so there's a lot of time before these things need to be done.

We're working on a way to provide this workshop remotely, so some way that you're going to be able to use the tax filing software and then work with one of the volunteers using some sort of remote program like Zoom and so you can have a virtual review of your tax form before you submit it. This process should allow you to get the same help that you would normally get during the tax workshop but to do so remotely so that you can stay safe. Now, we appreciate your patience with all of this as we get it set up. It's been very difficult. We've had to train new volunteers for it. One thing I'll say, is that if you're really eager to complete things and you want to ask some questions, send us an email at [IP-vita@uiowa.edu](mailto:IP-vita@uiowa.edu), and I'm typing that email address into the chat function right now, so that's [IP-vita@uiowa.edu](mailto:IP-vita@uiowa.edu).

One more thing that I'll mention about taxes, even though it was not part of the Q&A or part of the frequently asked questions. Some of you may have heard about these checks that the government is sending to residents of the United States. These checks are for \$1,200 and they are not for anyone who is a non-resident alien, so the vast majority of you have been in the U.S. for fewer than five years. That means that you are a non-resident alien. After you've been in the U.S. for five years or more, you might become a resident alien, but the government may send you a check by mistake. If you are someone who has not been in the U.S. for more than five years and you get one of these checks, contact us at [IP-vita@uiowa.edu](mailto:IP-vita@uiowa.edu) and do so right away. That is a mistake and we want to make sure that you don't get in trouble for the government's mistake, so if you get that check even though you haven't been here for more than five years, email us at [IP-vita@uiowa.edu](mailto:IP-vita@uiowa.edu)

so we can help correct that mistake.

And I think that is our last question, so we can open it up to any questions that you have. Now, we've already had a lot of great questions submitted and we're going to go through those but if you have more, if there's a question that we didn't get to that you were hoping we would, or if you get a question based on what we say now, please do not hesitate to ask your question.

I'm going to give the first question to Brandon and the question is, **this student is planning to graduate in July and they want to start their OPT on August 1st. When should they send out the OPT application and who should they contact to review the documents before sending them out?**

And I'll just mention even though I'm giving this one to Brandon if you have anything to chime in with, Andrea, feel free to. This is a great question. Yes. So, our office, so we aren't currently open for our normal walk-in hours, as you know, but we are still available to help review OPT applications and we actually can approve requests. Everything's done online and we print out the new OPT I-20s for you.

When can you actually start sending out the application? 90 days. Typically 90 days before graduation, it can kind of depend a little bit on your degree level. There are some options for students that are PhD students to potentially adjust their program end date to be able to apply for OPT a little bit earlier. But it sounds like this student is again going to be completing their degree in July and would like to start their OPT in August, so there might be some flexibility with their program end date.

And so if you do have questions about this, the best way is to contact our office and you can send an email to the [ISSS@uiowa.edu](mailto:ISSS@uiowa.edu) email account or you're welcome to call us, too, at our office phone number. We do have resources on our website with detailed instructions and we even have a video that was created, too, that shows you how to go about applying for OPT that we can share with you.

Thank you for mentioning that, Brandon. I forgot about that video. It's a wonderful presentation that Kevin in our office did and I have put the [ISSS@uiowa.edu](mailto:ISSS@uiowa.edu) email and our office phone number, 319-335-0335, in the chat for people as well.

Our next question is one that I will take quickly. This person has a question about **J1 scholars going back to their home country and being outside the U.S. for more than 30 days while they continue their program in their home country. The question is, "Is this allowed?"** And the answer is yes. If you are continuing to do your program activity and you want to come back to the U.S., we will keep your record active. So, you would have to continue your program activity while outside the U.S. but, if you can do that, we will maintain your record. Now, if your visa has expired already, you will need to renew your visa before you can come back and that very likely will require an in-person interview at a consulate or embassy.

And unfortunately, right now, those are very difficult to get, if it's possible at all. So you might need to contact the consulate or embassy in your home country to see when would it be possible for you to get that interview before you make a decision? But you are allowed as a J1 scholar to return

home and maintain your program as long as you are continuing in your activities. So as long as you can continue to do the research or teaching or whatever you're doing, then it's fine.

The next question I'm going to give to Andrea and so this question is, **"I'm graduating this summer and I've been accepted to a doctoral program at the University of Iowa. But I'm still waiting for funding. If my funding results come after August 10th will there be enough time for me to get my new I-20 before the new semester starts?"**

So they're going to graduate in the summer and they're going to start a doctoral program in the fall.

If this student is admitted to a doctoral program here at the University of Iowa, then we are talking about the change of degree level. And this would be a future change of degree level. What it means is that if you are graduating this summer, you will be finished with your program on August 7th.

So that's the end of the summer session and students who are changing their degree level are allowed to get this processed within the 60 days following the graduation. And so if you may get your funding results after August 10th, that would be still fine because you would be within the permitted period of time when your change of degree level can still be processed before the fall semester starts on August 24th.

So it will be important that you will have this window of opportunity of about 10 to 14 days to have the change of degree level processed after August 10th and before August 24th before the semester starts. So yeah, you should be fine but it will require that you do things as promptly as possible and make sure that you follow up with the Change of Degree Level request in iHawk, that your academic advisor approves it on time so that you can get your I-20 on time as well.

OK. Wonderful. Thank you, Andrea, and I just want to mention I put the link to our Change of Degree level page in the chat, so if you wanted to know more information about changing degree level, you can find it there. The next question is from somebody who **wanted to find that Duo app** that I talked about. They looked for it in the Android store and they couldn't find it the app store so they want to know the full name.

I am instead just going to link to a page ITS at the University of Iowa provides. The app is called Duo Mobile and there's some information on that web page about how to install it and to get it set up so take a look at the website that I just put in the chat.

The next question I will give to Brandon. This person wanted to thank us first for holding this meeting and then they ask, **"Are there any restrictions on international students taking summer classes?"**

Yes, this is a good question. There are no restrictions on international students for taking summer classes. The only restrictions would be if you were a brand new international student-- then there are requirements to be what's considered fully enrolled but if you're a new international student, in order to be fully enrolled, you would need five semester hours for graduate and professional students. And then six semester hours for undergraduate students and that would be for the eight-week session that will be starting on June 15th. But for current students that are already in their

degree program, there are no restrictions on taking any type of summer classes. You're not even required to necessarily take summer classes unless it's your final session of study.

All right, thank you, Brandon.

<Andrea> I would like to add to that if I may, Michael, if that's okay.

<Michael> Please.

Just if there was a situation where a student may be graduating from the spring semester and they just need summer to take prerequisites. In order to start a new program in the fall and they would be changing their degree level but they don't necessarily are admitted for the summer as a new program start date, but they just need to take some prerequisites, they would be in a non-degree level and if that would be the case, for example, then they would be considered...they would be issued a new initial I-20 and, as such, would also be required to take those, the registration as Brandon mentioned earlier. For graduate students, it would be five semester hours, and for undergraduate students six semester hours. So I just wanted to mention that could be another possibility when students would be required to have a full registration during the summer.

Thank you very much for adding that.

Okay and Andrea, I'm actually going to give you the next question. This person says that they're **staying with a relative in the U.S. until it's safer to travel home. Should they update their residing address to this relative's house until they go back to their home country?**

Yeah, that's a very good question and we touched up on the address update earlier in FAQ presentation. And I believe that Brandon mentioned this that the government does require that students provide and update their U.S. residing address within 10 days of changing this address. And so, if you have moved because of you know, the current situation and your lease has expired or your dormitory is no longer available and you are with another—a different address, but still in the United States, yes by all means, please do update this address in MYUI, and then you will be all good. And then remember, when you come back to the United States for the fall semester to update your address again to whatever your future address in the fall semester will be. Remember to do this as soon as possible. The regulations mention within 10 days of the change, but the sooner the better before you forget about it.

Thank you so much Andrea, I will answer the next question, and I'm actually going to bundle a couple of related questions that have come in together and so both of these questions involve, if you're on OPT or you're applying for OPT right now, there's a lot of hiring freezes at different companies across the country and it's very difficult for people to find employment. And so the question is, is there any chance that USCIS might extend the 90 days of unemployment rule, or will there be any changes to that rule because of all the uncertainty? And, unfortunately, we have not been given any indication that USCIS will change that rule. A couple of things are important to note. You don't have to be physically present at a place in order to be working there, and any number of jobs that you do related to your degree as long as the total hours add up to 20 hours of work per week or more—that would be enough to constitute employment. So, if you can find any job working for the university online, teaching in your field or anything like that, even if it's part-time

work, and you find a couple of things and cobble them together to make more than 20 hours of work per week, that would be enough. But there has been no indication from USCIS so far that there's any change to that rule. The last indication the government gave was if people are approaching 90 days of unemployment, they need to start preparing to leave the U.S. Of course, we don't know if that will change and if anything does change we will notify students right away but as of right now there is no indication that that will change either now or in the near future.

The next question I will pass off to Brandon and that is **if the university keeps its physical doors closed for the fall semester, are international students required to stay in the U.S. to fulfill the student visa requirements?**

Yeah, this is another great question.

So, the current guidance that we have has allowed us to again, allow students for this semester to continue to maintain their immigration status based on completing the rest of this semester online. And if classes are offered online in the fall semester only, and the current guidance still allows us to do that, it would allow students to still fulfill their visa requirements without necessarily being staying within the U.S.

Similar to this semester. But again, we haven't had...the university has not decided to have classes only online, and again, they're planning on offering face-to-face in person classes for the fall.

Thank you very much Brandon. I will answer this next question because it looks like it's related to the tax question I talked about earlier. If **a person has been in the U.S. for more than five years and they received the money from the government, what can they do with it?**

I'm going to advise you to, once again, the email address is in the chat, but email [ip-vita@uiowa.edu](mailto:ip-vita@uiowa.edu) because they are our tax experts. If they determine that you are a resident alien, which means that you are one of the people who is allowed to get that money, then you may be allowed to keep it. But you should definitely email [ip-vita@uiowa.edu](mailto:ip-vita@uiowa.edu) so that they can look at your information and decide if it was appropriate. you don't want to take any chances with this so you should email those people.

We're almost done with questions, thank you everybody for continuing to listen, even though we've gone a little bit over time. I'm going to give this next one to Andrea. And the question is, **how long does it currently take to apply for and obtain CPT working permission?**

Thank you Michael. So the CPT, the good part is that CPT is being approved--reviewed and approved by ISSS advisor. And so taking that into account, it certainly takes less time than OPT, but it really...because we're working remotely, we would suggest to submit your CPT request sooner because of what we were mentioning earlier in the presentation about that it takes a little bit longer to mail the I-20 once we issue it for CPT. And so it's difficult to estimate how long it will take for each student individually because it depends on what kind of job they're applying, how, you know, what type of work and what kind of documents they have submitted. Each advisor needs to carefully review the CPT, so that in itself, takes a few days. And then by the time we come to the conclusion that the CPT can be approved, then you need to calculate additional minimum 10 days

for delivery of your new I-20 with the CPT authorization. So I would say, minimum two-three weeks to calculate for, so please take that into account when you are planning for your CPT.

And I'll just add that we have had a few students who applied for CPT who wanted to get the I-20 right away and those students have submitted an eShipGlobal and in those cases those students get their CPT I-20 very quickly. Now, it is true that we're giving priority to things that are more time-sensitive.

So if your CPT doesn't begin until June or July, it might take a little bit longer than someone whose CPT starts next week. We're going to try to help people out who have an immediate need a little bit faster. So do be patient with us, we're still getting documents out every single day, but sometimes between the volume and the mail it can take a little bit longer.

Okay. So this next question is a little bit tricky but I think I will give it to Brandon. This person has actually received their EAD card and they were about to get an offer letter when their employer froze the hiring process and they haven't said when the hiring process will be unfrozen.

Their OPT starting date is set for mid-June. And they want to know if they have to physically start working or if the offer letter will work for them.

Yes, it's like great question. Let me just...

This is a difficult question that, honestly, the government has not given us a lot of information to go on during all these Covid-19 preparations.

Yeah, so, in general you would need to actually have started employment because you need to be maintaining that 20 hours of work per week. And so, I think depending on kind of what that entails - if it's just an offer letter or if there's any type of process in terms of like your employment paperwork that can be started, as well as like finding out when they would actually be able to start working...I think would be important to find out from the employer.

Yeah, I absolutely agree, Brandon. If a company has you in their system as an employee already and then just furloughs you or tells you not to come in, that would probably be okay. But if they have not yet gotten to the point where they consider you an employee that offer letter might not be enough.

Andrea did you want to chime in?

No, I was just going to mention that normally students are required to be hired under normal circumstances to start, you know, physically working or have been hired as an employee on OPT, so that's all I was going to mention. And Brandon actually mentioned that.

Perfect and then I'll give this question to you Andrea, where it's another question where I think people are hoping that the government has made an exception but I don't think they've told us anything yet. Normally the requirement for getting OPT is that you've been lawfully enrolled on a full-time basis for a full academic year. **Is it possible for people to get practical training**

**authorization if they have not been enrolled full-time for an academic year?**

Yeah, I agree with you Michael because we have not really heard anything from the U.S. government and any updates specifically from USCIS on any guidelines--new updated guidelines--on whether this requirement specifically was relaxed or not. So right now the assumption is that whoever is applying for OPT or planning to apply for OPT still the one year academic, ah, I'm sorry. The registration, the full-time registration, or the equivalent of full-time registration for one full academic year before applying for OPT is required. So, we would notify students as soon as we have any updates on the OPT, I'm pretty sure, Michael, is that correct? That's absolutely correct. You know, we are monitoring the communications from federal agencies every day to see if there's anything new that affects our students. And as soon as we see anything like this that would radically change who's eligible for some benefits, we will let everyone know. We will send out a mass email. But as of right now there has been no notification that suggests it would be easier to apply for those things.

And that was the last of our asked questions, so Brandon, do you want to take us home. Yes, thank you all for your excellent questions. And we thank you very much for all your participation and joining us today. We just want to also highlight again that we are here and available to help you and we're here to support you during this time, so we are available Monday through Friday, again, we're working remotely 8am to 5pm, and the best way to get a hold of us is either by email at the [iss@uiowa.edu](mailto:iss@uiowa.edu) email account, or by phone at 319-335-0335. And if there are any more like specific questions that you had about your specific situation again, please feel free to reach out to us at either email or by phone and we're happy to help you. The only other thing I just want to mention is that we are recording this and it may be able to provide this recorded version in the future to refer to.

Thanks for being here everybody. Thank you. We will look forward to hearing from you.

And stay safe out there.