FAQs for Incoming International Students

At this point, the mode of instruction for fall 2020 has yet to be finalized. The responses below are based on the assumption that SJSU offers at least a partially online program in response to the COVID-19 crisis in fall 2020, as is currently planned.

I just received my admit letter and I-20. Should I pay the SEVIS fee even though the US Embassy in my country is closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Yes, you should pay the SEVIS fee online and print the receipt showing proof of payment. This is required for your visa appointment.

How does switching to online instruction affect my immigration status?

Under normal circumstances, F-1 students are limited by immigration regulations to taking a maximum of one course (3-4 units) online to meet the full-time enrollment requirements. However, due to COVID-19, SEVP (Student and Exchange Visitor Program) has made an exception for spring 2020 allowing a full load of online coursework. Current federal guidance suggests that F-1 students at SJSU will continue to have this exception in fall 2020.

For Fall 2020 admits, will taking online classes have any effect on students' CPT or OPT application in the future?

Current immigration regulations state that in order to be eligible for CPT, you have to be in F-1 visa status (in the U.S.) for one full academic year (e.g. fall and spring academic semesters) and in good academic standing.

As indicated above, we do not expect enrollment in online courses in fall 2020 at SJSU to affect your visa status. Therefore, if you arrive in the United States and begin your F-1 status in fall 2020, you would be eligible for CPT in summer 2021. If you begin F-1 status in spring 2021, you would be eligible for CPT after one academic year from when you start, unless SEVP provides an exception to this rule.

If the US Embassy in my country remains closed and I can't get a visa for Fall 2020, will I be able to take online classes and then appear for a visa interview later when they resume services to arrive on campus in Spring 2021 to continue with my studies?

Yes, you may enroll in online classes at SJSU while in your home country and then obtain a visa based on a spring 2021 start date I-20. The fee you pay for the DS-160 (visa application) is
valid for one year. This would allow you to begin your studies on time and still enjoy the benefits of in-person study on the SJSU campus when you are able to be here.

**Will online classes fulfill the fulltime 12 months of classes requirement for students who will apply for CPT?**

We don’t know yet. Current immigration regulations state that in order to be eligible for CPT, you have to be in F-1 visa status (in the U.S.) for one full academic year (e.g. fall and spring academic semesters) and in good academic standing. At this time, we don’t know whether SEVP will provide an exception and count the fall 2020 semester toward CPT eligibility for a student matriculated at SJSU in fall 2020 and taking online classes from their home country while awaiting their F-1 visa.

**Will I be able to defer my Fall 2020 application to Spring 2021? If allowed, do I have to request a new I-20 and pay a new SEVIS fee?**

Deferral requests need to be made with the Admissions Office. If they authorize your deferral to Spring 2021, then we would need to amend your I-20 start and end date. The deferral of I-20 dates would not require you to pay a new SEVIS fee. An amended I-20 would need to be mailed to you.