New Guidance on Use of Electronic Signatures and Transmission of I-20s

November 2, 2021

On Nov. 1, 2021, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) published SEVP Policy Guidance: Use of Electronic Signatures and Transmission for the Form I-20 [1], which permits designated school officials (DSOs, i.e. OISS Advisers) to electronically sign and transmit the Form I-20 (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Students) to initial and continuing students and their dependents. The flexibility with providing electronic signatures and electronic transmission of I-20s was first introduced by SEVP at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic due to disruptions in international mail and courier services and with this updated guidance this policy is here to stay.

Under this guidance, OISS Advisers will be able to electronically sign all signature fields on the Form I-20 using software programs or applications, or by using electronically reproduced copies of a personal signature. Additionally, we will be able to scan and email or electronically transmit the Form I-20 via secure platform, such as a school portal or other secure site, to F-1 students and their dependents. We will be using OISS Connect and attaching I-20s to your relevant records for you to access.

If you need a new travel signature (please check the second page of your I-20; it is valid for 12 months from the date it was given), please contact your OISS Adviser [2]. Although we will be mostly signing and providing I-20s electronically, if you wish, you can still bring your printed I-20 to OISS during our business hours [3] and get an ink signature at our front desk.

Please note that although OISS Advisers are now allowed to electronically sign and transmit the Form I-20, upon receipt of your I-20, you are still required to print it and sign with ink to present at any required visa interview and upon arrival at a U.S. port of entry. Please make sure to always carry a printed copy of your I-20 as showing the document in electronic version to a government official is still not acceptable.

SEVP also announced that they coordinated with its government partners within the U.S. Department of Homeland
Security, U.S. Department of State and U.S. Social Security Administration to ensure continued acceptance of electronically signed Forms I-20. If you encounter an issue with a government partner accepting an electronically signed Form I-20 or have questions about this guidance, please contact your OISS Adviser. [2]


Links:
[2] https://oiss.yale.edu/about/connect-with-oiss
[3] https://oiss.yale.edu/about/hours-directions-parking