FAQs For Newly Admitted Students

Updated August 2, 2020

Planning for Fall 2020

On July 24th DHS/ICE released Clarifying Questions for Fall 2020 [1] and we now have a clearer understanding of how Yale’s Fall 2020 model and your individual choices of enrollment will impact your F-1 status.

Given the many different programs within Yale, specific questions about enrollment options for the fall semester are best answered by directly communicating with your school. For more general information about how Yale will operate in the fall, please refer to these University updates [2].

Please know that both Yale and OISS are committed to supporting you through this difficult period and ensuring that you are able to participate in your academic program this fall, should you choose to do so.

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My I-20

Do I Need an Updated I-20 with Remarks?

When the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rescinded their July 6th guidance and July 7th FAQs, the I-20 annotation requirement ended. However, there is still some miscommunication within the different agencies of the government. To assist, OISS will provide a new electronic I-20 with a remark about Yale’s Fall 2020 program to any incoming student who does not already have an I-20 with this annotation. We ask your patience as we update a large volume of I-20 Forms. In addition to the I-20, students can also download, print, and present a letter explaining Yale’s Fall 2020 model [3].

Visa Appointment Questions

When can I get my F-1 or J-1 visa?

Since the Department of State first announced [4] a phased-in resumption of visa services, OISS has had reports of students obtaining visa appointments for their F-1 or J-1 visas. If you have not done so yet, please pursue securing a visa appointment as soon as possible – even if the date is after the start of classes (see below regarding expedited appointments). Keep in mind that some country specific travel bans may make it difficult or impossible to secure an appointment. Please review all of the Current Travel Restrictions page [5] for additional information.
How can I request an expedited visa appointment?

Some embassies and consulates offer expedited appointment requests, but the protocols might vary at each location. You should first secure a visa appointment for any date (even if it is after the start of classes), and then request an expedited appointment. Normal visa wait times are available on the U.S. Department of State’s [visa appointment](https://travel.state.gov/content/visas) page, and you should contact your local embassy or consulate for details on requesting an expedited appointment. Please note that some U.S. Embassies/Consulates allow you to request an expedited appointment only once, so make sure you understand the process before you submit a request. The reason for the expedite would be that you need to travel to the U.S. to resume your program of study and there are no regular visa appointments available before your start date. However, please note that if the U.S. Embassy/Consulate is not ready to resume limited services, it is not unusual for your expedite request to be denied, so you might want to wait until you know that they are resuming visa services for students. In some cases, your program at Yale may be willing to write a statement on your behalf. Please also [download and print this OISS letter](https://oiss.yale.edu) which addresses the Fall 2020 semester.

Is it true that I may qualify for an exemption of the travel ban if I am living in a Schengen region country, Ireland, or the UK?

Yes, the Department of State [announced exemptions](https://travel.state.gov/content/visas) in mid-July. We recommend that you print and carry the linked announcement with you when you travel, since not all airline personnel or security staff at your departure, transit, or arrival points might be aware of this exception. OISS has also received reports that the procedures to request a national interest exemption (especially for J-1 visa holders) differ slightly depending on the U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Please check with your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for details.

Travel and Arrival in New Haven

If I have a valid F-1 or J-1 visa, can I travel to the U.S.?

If you have a valid F-1 or J-1 visa, you may use that visa to enter the U.S. with your Yale I-20 or DS-2019 (see below for important start date reminders). However, you still need to consider existing travel bans and evolving travel restrictions, as well as your personal situation before deciding if travel is right for you. When making travel plans, please review your flight itinerary and remember that even if you start from a non-travel ban country, a layover in a country that is covered by a travel ban will likely prevent you from being admitted to the U.S. However, please review the section about certain exemptions covering the Schengen area, Ireland, and the UK above.

What do I do if I cannot arrive by the start dates on my I-20 or DS-2019 form?

Regulations require that F-1 students and J-1 exchange visitors arrive in the U.S. on or before their “program start date” listed on the I-20 or DS-2019. If you will be traveling to Yale after this date, your I-20 or DS-2019 will need to be amended with a new start date. Amendments do not cancel your visa or change your SEVIS ID, they only amend the information in your existing SEVIS record which is then printed on an updated I-20 or DS-2019. Please contact your OISS adviser so that we can send you a new amended Form I-20 or DS-2019.

Can I travel to a country which is not under a travel ban and then travel to the U.S. after 14 days?

You may want to research this option, but given the constantly changing dynamics there are risks.
Deferring the Start of Your Program

If I defer my enrollment to Fall 2021 who should I notify?

If you decide to defer your enrollment, please let both your school’s admissions office and OISS know so we can be informed of your enrollment plans. Depending on the length of your deferral, OISS will either issue an I-20 for the new date (January 2021), or cancel your current SEVIS record and issue you a new I-20 for the Fall 2021.

SEVIS Transfer Students

What if I am already in the U.S. on an F-1 or J-1 visa that I am transferring to Yale?

If you are in the U.S. now, OISS does not advise any international travel prior to the start of classes. Once you have your Transfer-Pending I-20 or your DS-2019 from Yale you are ready to relocate to New Haven. Please get in touch with your OISS adviser [9] about the steps to register your SEVIS record upon arrival at Yale.

What if I have a Transfer-Pending I-20 but I am outside the U.S. and cannot travel to New Haven?

We are awaiting guidance from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on how to handle Transfer-Pending records if the you cannot return to the U.S. and remain enrolled from outside the U.S. Please get in touch with your OISS adviser [9] about your record status and options for maintaining status until you are able to arrive at Yale.

Enrolling in Class if my Travel is Delayed

Can I take classes remotely while I am outside the U.S. if I cannot arrive by the date classes start? What about if I arrive in the U.S. after classes start?

New students in F-1 Initial status who cannot arrive in the U.S. on time have two choices: you can either remain in your home country and enroll remotely for the fall semester (we will amend your start date and keep your SEVIS record in initial status), or if your school allows you to arrive after classes start (please check with your school to find out the latest date you can arrive on campus for the fall semester) we will amend your I-20 program start date until you are able to enter the U.S. and you will begin your program remotely with the hope that your arrival is not delayed very long. If you hope to arrive in the U.S. after the classes start, you need to be very careful in selecting courses. Under the current guidance, you cannot have a fully online course schedule and at least one of your courses must have a meaningful in-person component for you to be eligible for admission into the U.S. Please check with your school to make sure that at least one of the classes which you will start remotely from outside the U.S., will have a meaningful in-person component after you arrive in the U.S.

Change of Status Students

I filed a Change of Status request with USCIS, but the processing time may be 5-8 months, will I...
be able to enroll in classes?

A pending Change of Status request can sometimes permit enrollment in classes, but it is crucial that you are able to maintain your underlying (most recent) status until the request is approved. If a change of status to B1/B2 is approved but your student status is not, you are unable to enroll while in a tourist status. As the Fall semester begins you should contact your OISS adviser [9] for more detailed instructions.

Getting Help from OISS

Who do I contact at OISS if I have questions?

You may contact your OISS adviser [10]. We know that this is a stressful time for you and that you are eager for answers. We are working as fast as we can to answer your emails and will get back to you as soon as we can. Please keep checking this page for updates.