

COVID 19 Frequently Asked Questions
Office of International Student Services
Pepperdine University

1. I heard that my F-1 visa in my passport will be canceled if I return to my home country!

No. Your visa (in your passport) will not be canceled by the U.S. government unless there has been a violation of status. The current situation due to the COVID-19 outbreak does not affect the validity of your visa whether or not you are in the U.S. or return to your home country.

2. My F-1 visa will expire soon. Do I need to leave the U.S. and obtain a new visa?

No, you may remain in the U.S. for the duration of your F-1 status (in other words, while you are attending school or engaging in OPT) even after your visa has expired. If you leave the U.S., however, you cannot re-enter on an expired visa. You may be eligible for an exception if you are traveling to Canada, Mexico, or one of the islands adjacent to the U.S. Contact the OISS for more information.

3. What should I do if my passport is expiring?

You must maintain your passport's validity at all times. If you need to renew your passport, please contact the consulate of the country that issued your passport at least 1 year before it expires.

4. Can I stay in the U.S. and take classes fully online for the remainder of the Spring 2020 term?

Yes, the SEVP (branch of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security that oversees schools and students) issued a guidance on March 9, allowing schools and OPT employers to provide alternate, remote methods of course instruction or employment for a specified projected period.

5. Can I continue to live in the dorm?

If you need to continue living on campus or more time to plan, you have to submit your request by filling out this [form](#). Housing and Residence Life (HRL) will be in contact with you and give you instructions.

6. Can I return to my home country to finish my Spring 2020 term online?

Yes, you can finish your classes online from your home country. Submit the Travel Permission or I-20 Update Request through the OISS Portal (oiss.pepperdine.edu). Call the OISS if you are departing within 10 days of submitting your request. Make sure you inform your professors of any issues that may impact your learning online. As a follow-up to the guidance issued by SEVP on Monday, March 9, 2020, concerning the COVID-19 situation, SEVP issued a guidance on March 13, 2020, allowing F-1 students to temporarily count online classes towards a full course of study even if they have left the United States and are taking the online classes from elsewhere. This temporary provision is only in effect for the duration of the emergency. This guidance may be subject to change. SEVP will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and will adjust its guidance as needed.

7. Do I have to attend the commencement ceremony if I am graduating this Spring?

Students do not have to attend the commencement ceremony to graduate. If you applied for graduation, contact the Registrar's Office for more information. In turn, the Registrar's Office will be able to notify you in the event the commencement ceremony is canceled or rescheduled.

8. How can I extend my stay if I graduate in Spring or Summer 2020?

If you are graduating this Spring or Summer 2020, apply for OPT as soon as possible. Go to the [OPT Manual Spring 2020](#) version on the OISS website. The OPT Workshops have been canceled for the rest of the Spring 2020 term. However, we recommend that you contact the OISS and speak to your DSO after you have prepared your application materials, to make sure you are not making any mistakes.

If you do not plan to apply for OPT, but need additional time before you feel safe to travel outside the U.S., you can file an application for change of visa status to "visitor" status. Your application must be filed before your F-1 status expires. Consulting an attorney is strongly recommended.

9. What if I cannot come back to the U.S.?

For any reason if you cannot return to the U.S., please notify OISS for further instructions.

10. What if I cannot come back to resume OPT?

As long as you have not exceeded 90 days of unemployment, you are eligible to apply for admission to the U.S. to continue OPT. However, if you have been employed but were working remotely from outside the U.S., your DSO should be consulted for the latest guidance from the SEVP regarding students on OPT who are working remotely.

11. Will I be able to conduct business with the Office of International Student Services (OISS) for the remainder of the spring term?

Yes, the OISS will remain operational Monday through Friday from 8:00am until 5:00pm PDT