



Congratulations on your admission to Boston College! We look forward to welcoming you to BC! We understand that, as an international student, you may have concerns about your ability to enter the U.S. during the COVID-19 pandemic. The OISS has prepared a Frequently Asked Questions to address some of the common questions related to visa applications and international travel. The situation is constantly changing so please continue to check your email and the [OISS website](#) for updates.

### When will I be able to apply for a visa?

- **Embassy and Consulate re-openings:** On July 14<sup>th</sup>, the U.S. State Department of State announced a [phased reopening](#) of routine visa services as determined by individual regions and countries. Please check with your local [U.S. Embassy or Consulate's website](#) for more information. **Note: You CANNOT enter on a tourist visa and study in the U.S. You must enter on a student visa.**
- In most cases, you will need the SEVIS ID on your I-20 form in order to secure your visa appointment. Please complete the Declaration of Finances form as soon as possible if you have not done so already and submit it to the admissions office as instructed. Please email the OISS if you would like your SEVIS ID and school code emailed to you to facilitate making your visa appointment prior to receiving the form.

### What are the current travel restrictions on entry into the U.S.?

- **COVID-19 travel restrictions:** On July 16<sup>th</sup> the [Department of State announced](#) that F-1 students traveling from the Schengen Area, the UK and Ireland CAN travel to the U.S. Students coming from [Canada](#) and [Mexico](#) land borders as students will be considered "essential travel". Updates about travel restrictions will be posted on the [NAFSA website](#), as well as on the [CDC Travel Page](#).
- **Chinese Students:** On May 29<sup>th</sup> the President announced a [Proclamation on the Suspension of Entry as Nonimmigrants of Certain Students and Researchers from the People's Republic of China](#). As of June 1, 2020, the proclamation suspends the entry of a small number of F-1 and J-1 GRADUATE students into the U.S. who are deemed affiliated with the PRC's "military-civil fusion strategy". It does NOT apply to undergraduate students. You can also find a summary of the proclamation on our professional organizations website [here](#). Also, on June 15<sup>th</sup>, a [US Department of Transportation order](#) went into effect limiting the amount of flights to and from the U.S., therefore flight availability could be very limited.
- The OISS is closely monitoring the proclamation and COVID related travel guidelines and will provide additional updates [on our website](#) as new information becomes available.

### What if I am not able to get a flight and/or visa in time to arrive in time for the start of classes?

- **Undergraduates:** You **MUST arrive by the end of the drop/add period on September 9<sup>th</sup>**. You cannot arrive at BC after this date and you must take your courses from abroad. All undergraduate students taking all online courses must complete the [online request form](#). International students abroad with visa or travel restrictions will automatically be approved. **Important! Once this form is completed you will forfeit your housing for the semester!** Your housing placement for spring semester will likely change and is not guaranteed. The Office of Residential Life will be prioritizing international students for housing in the spring semester.
- **Graduate students:** Grad students are being encouraged to come by September 9<sup>th</sup>. If you are delayed please contact your academic department to check if they can accommodate your late arrival. BC is currently working with Human Resources to determine if students with TAs and RAs will be able to get paid while abroad.
- **Leaves of Absence:** If you decide to take a leave of absence for anything other than an approved medical leave, we will not be able to keep your F-1 or J-1 status active.

### What if I want to defer my admission?

- Undergraduate students will not be able to defer their admission. New graduate students wishing to defer their admission need to speak to the admissions office for further instructions.

### **If I defer my admission or I'm taking classes online abroad for the fall semester will I need a new I-20?**

- If an initial I-20 has already been issued for you with an August 2020 start date, the start date on your I-20 form will be deferred to a January 19, 2021 (or the semester you choose to return) and we will need to send you a revised I-20 form. You will need the updated form to apply for an F-1 visa in your country and can apply for a visa up to 120 days prior to the start date listed on the I-20.
- For students transferring their I-20 from another school and wish to defer, please see information below.

### **Will BC provide me with a new I-20 stating my program is not all online?**

- The Department of Homeland Security ICE July 6th guidance and the July 7th FAQ requiring this I-20 update were rescinded on July 14<sup>th</sup>. The March 9th policy guidance and the addendum issued on March 13th are now in effect until further notice. An updated I-20 is no longer required per DHS/ICE. The OISS has posted a letter on [our website](#) for you to provide the U.S. Embassy or Consulate or Port of Entry if this is questioned.

### **What if I'm transferring my immigration status from another school? Should I travel? What if I'm abroad now?**

- **What do I need to do to transfer my SEVIS record?** If you have completed another degree in the U.S. (including Optional Practical Training) you must indicate this on your Declaration of Finances form and request your previous school to transfer your SEVIS record to Boston College within 60 days of completion of your degree or OPT if you are on an F-1 visa. J-1 visa holders must transfer their J-1 record immediately after completion.
- **Will my visa in my passport remain valid if I transfer?** As long as your immigration record is transferred to BC in a timely manner, your visa from your previous school remains valid for re-entry to the U.S.
- **What if my visa expires while I'm in the U.S.?** You can remain in the United States with an expired visa. However, the next time you travel outside of the United States (or Canada, Mexico, or the adjacent Caribbean islands), you must renew your visa at a US Embassy in order to return.
- **Am I required to start in the fall semester?** Students transferring their visa status are expected to begin classes at the next available start date.
- **What if I already left and am abroad?** If you are abroad and unable to return for classes due to travel restrictions, you will need to take online classes full-time in order to be able to return to the U.S. using your current F-1 I-20 and visa. Your record will become inactive while you are abroad and **we will need to ask the government to reactivate your I-20 before you return.** *It is very important that you contact the OISS weeks prior to your anticipated arrival into the U.S.* **Note:** If you are unable to return to the U.S. and *choose* not to take online courses, we can no longer transfer your SEVIS record. You will need a new I-20 and will need to pay the SEVIS fee again and possibly get a new F-1 visa.
- **Can I travel abroad this summer?** If you are currently in the U.S. and planning to travel abroad this summer, we strongly recommend consulting the OISS before making any travel plans given current risks with travel. Even if your F-1 visa remains valid, you may be subject to ever-changing COVID travel restrictions and have difficulty returning.

### **Will I need to quarantine when I arrive?**

- Boston College has a plan in place to provide on-site COVID tests to the entire BC community and therefore you will not need to quarantine. For more information please see the [Vice President of Student Affairs's letter](#). [University Health Services](#) has an infirmary for students who may be sick and need to quarantine.

### **How many online only courses will I be allowed to take as a new student in the U.S.?**

- On July 24<sup>th</sup>, the Department of Homeland Security confirmed in updated policy guidance that new students in initial F-1 status may apply for an F-1 visa and enter the U.S. as long as their classes are **not** fully online in Fall 2020. If you are a new student in initial F-1 status you will need to make sure you take at least one hybrid course in order to apply for a visa and enter the U.S.

### **Do I need to pay for BC Health Insurance if I'm not able to travel to the U.S.?**

- If you plan to re-enter the U.S. fall semester, you must remain enrolled in the health insurance, even if your arrival is delayed (note: undergraduates cannot arrive after drop-add, graduate students should check with their department). If you will be registered as a full-time student abroad and will definitely *not* return for the fall semester you will likely be asked to sign a form stating that you will not return in the fall in order to waive the insurance. Health insurance fees cannot be prorated for the semester. If you are a graduate student and your department allows you to arrive late, you will be billed for the entire semester.

### **Where can I find more information about COVID-19?**

The situation is changing often so please check the following resources:

- Visit the [BC COVID-19 re-opening website](#) for general information regarding BC's reopening plan.
- Department of State: <https://travel.state.gov>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection: <https://www.cbp.gov/border-security/ports-entry>
- Our professional organization, NAFSA, has a summary of COVID-19 travel restrictions [here](#).