





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TO: Boston University International Students

FROM: Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer 
Willis G. Wang, Vice President and Associate Provost for Global Programs 

DATE: July 9, 2020

SUBJECT: Updated Fall 2020 Guidelines from US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement

On July 6, 2020, US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) posted advanced notice of [Fall 2020 COVID-19 Guidance](#) affecting international students studying or intending to study in the US on F-1 visas (F-1 students). The new guidance, which would essentially require international students to leave the US unless they are taking in-person classes, is counterproductive, damaging to the academic progress of international students who are core members of our national research universities, xenophobic, and malicious. We are deeply troubled by this unexpected federal guidance which causes anxiety, disruption, and harm to international students across the country in the midst of a global pandemic.

International students are an integral part of the Boston University community and have been for many decades. We are committed to providing unqualified support to international students, including supporting legal efforts that seek to prevent the US Government from putting the new guidance into action. We will be joining an *amicus* brief in support of the lawsuit filed by Harvard and MIT in the US District Court in Boston which seeks to prohibit implementation of the proposed guidance, and we are working with the Massachusetts Attorney General who plans to file a lawsuit in US District Court next week. In addition, we are in direct contact with the Massachusetts Congressional delegation to express our concerns about the proposed guidance and to support efforts within Congress to urge ICE and the Department of Homeland Security to withdraw the planned policy.

While we fervently hope that this misguided policy will be withdrawn and will continue to work towards this goal, we think it is important to share with you our current understanding of how you might be affected by the new guidance, if it stands.

Under the planned guidance expected to be issued in early August, the options available to F-1 students will differ depending on whether they will attend a US institution offering only online courses, only in-person courses, or a hybrid mix of online and in-person courses in the fall 2020 semester. Boston University's Learn *from* Anywhere (LfA) teaching modality for fall 2020 is a hybrid teaching modality offering both in-person and remote courses.

The planned federal guidance sets forth the following rules for F-1 students enrolled at a US institution, such as BU, that offers hybrid teaching:

- F-1 students may enroll and may take more than one course online (likely up to three courses online), provided that they continue to take some courses in person. This means that Boston University's F-1 students who are able to be in Boston to take classes on BU's campuses would be able to enroll in classes as usual and retain their F-1 status.
- F-1 students enrolled at a hybrid teaching institution may not take all their coursework online in the fall 2020 semester and remain in the US to study. F-1 students who wish to remain in the US to study need to take some courses in-person, meaning that they would need to return to Boston University's campuses to retain F-1 status.
- F-1 students at BU who are unable to return to the US for the fall semester can take courses entirely remotely/online from outside the US, but under the proposed guidance they may not be able to retain active SEVIS records.
- Boston University does not intend to transition to remote/online-only courses unless required to do so for public health reasons. If BU (or any US institution) determines that it is necessary to shift from hybrid to fully online/remote at some point in the fall 2020 semester, F-1 students would be expected to leave the US as they are not allowed under the planned guidance to study only online while in the US. In this situation of fully online/remote courses, continuing F-1 students who are outside the US may be able to retain active SEVIS records if they are taking all-online courses and meeting the prescribed course of study requirements.

We recognize the painful implications of the planned federal guidance, and also know that the guidance presents many uncertainties and unanswered questions. BU continues to actively seek clarification and ways to limit the impact of the planned guidance on our international students, while we advocate for a complete reversal of the guidance. Please monitor the International Students and Scholars Office's (ISSO) [website](#) to find up-to-date information on the preliminary guidance. We strongly encourage you to contact your ISSO advisor or the ISSO at isso@bu.edu for assistance, especially as the official guidance from ICE could change. ISSO is also planning a series of Q&A sessions with your respective schools and colleges, which we hope many of you will attend.

As international students, you are vital and welcomed members of Boston University, bringing a wonderful diversity of ideas, backgrounds, and energy that makes our University the vibrant and academically nurturing place that it is for everyone in our community. We will continue to advocate for the reversal of this policy and will keep you informed as this situation evolves further. Please stay safe and well, and we look forward to welcoming you to the Boston University campus as soon as possible.