Student and Exchange Visitor Program Office

SEVIS Technical Conference Call with the Educational Community

Questions and Answers from Wednesday, June 28, 2006

1. Dependent's country of citizenship not batchable; some consulates asking for it

Members report that when adding F-2 dependents via a batch process, the "country of citizenship" field is not submitted to SEVIS. Though country of citizenship is not a required field, DSOs generally fill it in when it is known. Consular officers [holding for clarification on which consulates] have told members that they will not issue the visa until the citizenship field is completed. Would SEVP consider adding this field as a batchable field while keeping it an optional field?

Response: The country of citizenship (COC) field is not required in RTI or Batch, but it is an optional field for both, and it can be uploaded via batch. If there are issues when uploading this field, please contact the SEVIS Help Desk at 1.800.892.4829. We have not received calls on this in the past.

2. Canceling or rejecting a transfer in SEVIS

We appreciate some of the changes that SEVIS Release 5.1 has provided to PDSOs with respect to the option of transferring a record to a third school while it is still in initial status. However, DSOs are still required to create the initial I-20 in these cases. In a June 2005 conference call with NAFSA, SEVP stated that they would look into the option of giving a transfer-in school the option to cancel or reject a transfer in a future SEVIS release. This remains of great interest to schools. Could SEVP provide an update on the current plans for the option of canceling or rejecting a transfer-in record?

Response: At this point in time, SEVP does not plan to give P/DSOs at either school the option to cancel a transfer past the transfer release date in SEVIS. The transfer can only be cancelled prior to the transfer release date at the transfer-out school. If a transfer record needs to be cancelled and it is past the transfer release date, either the transfer-in or transfer-out school should call the SEVIS Help Desk.

3. Correction of passport and visa number fields in SEVIS

A member has reported noticing that the port-of-entry official has occasionally entered the same information in both the passport and visa number fields. At present DSOs and AROs

cannot correct this data. Is it likely that these students will later have problems getting a social security number, driver's license, etc., based on this information? Are there any plans to develop a functionality to allow DSOs and AROs to enter such corrections where needed?

Response: There are no plans to allow school or program officials to modify POE data on student or EV records. Should a student or EV experience difficulty obtaining a social security number, driver's license, etc., due to incorrect POE data on their I-20, he/she should contact their P/DSO or RO/ARO, who then should contact the SEVIS Help Desk.

4. J-1 Alert "Research Scholar(s) within 90 Days of Expiration of 3 Year Maximum"

This alert has periodically continued to list Exchange Visitors whose have been granted an extension beyond the three year maximum. Is this something that SEVP is aware of, and is this something that will be corrected with the 5.4 Release so that only those EVs who still need program extensions will appear on the alert?

Response: Yes, SEVP and the Department of State (DoS) are aware of this issue. The issue with the Alert will be addressed in SEVIS Release 5.4 with the implementation of the new regulatory requirements for the research scholar and professor regulations (22 CFR 62.20). The alert entitled, "Research Scholar(s) within 90 days of Expiration" will only be available to sponsors whose program number begins with "G-7" because only G-7 sponsors will be able to submit a request for an extension beyond the maximum duration of 5 years to the Department of State. With SEVIS Release 5.4, the G-7 sponsors will receive two alerts for the categories of research scholar and professor: 180 days and 90 days prior to the program end date when the EV's program length is 5 years or greater.

With the SEVIS Release 5.4, all non-G-7 sponsors will begin to utilize the alert entitled, "Exchange Visitor(s) Nearing the Program End Date in 60 Days" to acquire information on exchange visitor records (research scholars/professors) nearing their program end date.

Optimally, the name of the exchange visitor should drop from the Alert list when an extension within the maximum duration of program participation (five years or less) has been processed via SEVIS for that exchange visitor. Or, in the case of a sponsor with a program number beginning with G-7, with the submission of a request for an extension beyond maximum duration (5 years). (Refer to the following website for the Federal Register publication:
http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges/FR_Doc_05_10020.htm)

5. OPT mass data fix

A broadcast message sent to all P/DSOs on May 22, 2006 notified DSOs regarding the 110,000 datafixes that were performed on "pending" OPT records to show them as "approved."

- Will additional records be updated as data is provided to SEVP from CLAIMS – both for any outstanding "pending" records as well as those which are adjudicated on a daily basis?

- What is the processing time for updating records? For example, are the records updated nightly or weekly or on a different schedule? It would be helpful to know this to determine the accuracy of records.

Response: There are currently no scheduled OPT mass data fixes. Should a future issue be identified and a mass data fix required, we will evaluate the situation at that time.

The CLAIMS processing creates a file each morning (Monday – Friday), containing all records with a SEVIS ID that have an updated pending request or adjudication result. The file is sent to SEVIS and the records are updated in SEVIS immediately.

6. How will J researcher/professor 5-year functionality be implemented?

The upcoming SEVIS release 5.4 will put into effect the new Department of State regulations allowing a J-1 research scholar to perform research either in one continuous five year physical presence or spend time inside and outside the U.S. at one or multiple institutions during the same five year period.

The Department of State, in its final rule, explains as an example, "a research scholar who comes to an institution for two years and returns to his or her home institution for nine months will be eligible, as a program matter, to return to the same U.S. institution- or transfer to another- for an additional two years and three months." Could SEVP please explain to us how that process will be implemented? (for example, will the individual retain the same SEVIS ID, etc.) It is important for us to understand how this will work as we invite scholars who are likely to take these actions in the near future.

Response: Based upon the example provided, the exchange visitor would remain in Active SEVIS status (on the same SEVIS ID) while outside the United States. The Active status of the SEVIS record would allow the exchange visitor to return to the United States to the same U.S. institution to continue participation in his or her program; or, to the same institution where a transfer to another institution could be initiated.

A break in "valid program status" (i.e., a change from Active status of the SEVIS record to Inactive status, etc.) will require the issuance of a new Form DS-2019 resulting in a new SEVIS ID. A new Form DS-2019 is not be issued prior to two-years following the end date of any previous program participation as a research scholar or professor (refer to 22 CFR 62.20(i)(2)-Repeat participation, published in the Federal Register on May 19, 2005, Vol. 70, No. 96, pages 28815-28818: http://exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges/FR_Doc_05_10020.htm)

The Department of State is aware of the concerns of the sponsors in monitoring of the exchange visitors and their interest in being able to notify and report, via SEVIS, the departure from the United States of an exchange visitor who is continuing to participate in the activity for which he or she entered the United States, while doing so outside of the United States; and, being able to report the exchange visitor's reentry into the United States to continue in the same venue. The viability for capturing and reporting this information via SEVIS is under discussion at this time.