June 19, 2012 Webinar (SEVIS II Basics)

Questions and Answers

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The Individual Immigration Number and One-Person One-Record Concept

Q: Does the one-person one-record concept apply to all F, M, and J nonimmigrants?

A: Yes. The one-person, one-record concept applies to all individuals who enter the U.S. in F, M, or J status whether they come as the principal or as the dependent. Individuals will retain the same IIN even if they change statuses among those three classifications.

Q: How will the one-person one-record concept affect the students' current ability to leave the United States and "re-set" their F-1 status by re-entering on a new I-20 to begin a new program?

A: Even under current SEVIS, this is an action that a student may attempt with no guarantee of success. It is subject to applicable visa and admission regulations and policies. SEVIS II will not affect the legal ability to make this attempt. However, SEVIS II will make the student's entire SEVIS record available to consular officials and immigration inspectors. This increases the probability that the student may have to answer questions regarding earlier departures and the current re-entry.

Names and the Integrity of Student-Entered Data

Q: Will there be clear instructions for "Surname" or "Last Name"?

A: Yes. The system will provide clear instructions during the customer account setup process. There will also be specific instructions for students with only one name.

Q: What should people do if their passports do not list a last name or list only one name?

A: SEVIS II will require the nonimmigrant to enter the primary name in the last name field.

Q: Will DSOs be responsible for making sure that the information that the nonimmigrants enter is correct?

A: No. Nonimmigrants are responsible for maintaining the accuracy of their own biographical and personal data. School/Sponsor officials have the ability to review the information on a nonimmigrant that has a relationship (prospective, current, or former) with the school and can help nonimmigrants understand how to make corrections. Nonimmigrants may make some corrections directly in their own records, while some corrections require submission of Help Tickets. Consular officials can also correct certain information during the visa application processes.

Q: If a consular officer makes a mistake in overwriting a student record, how will that be corrected?

A: Students will be able to submit a helpdesk ticket to correct biographic data in their customer account. They will be required to provide supporting documentation for these changes.

Customer Accounts for School and Sponsor Officials

Q: Which School/Sponsor Officials must have customer accounts, and how will those relate to their organizations?

A: Each School/Sponsor Official must have a single customer account related to that person. An individual who holds two roles (e.g., DSO and ARO) will have a single customer account through which either role can be accessed. This differs fundamentally from current SEVIS, where separate SEVIS user names and passwords needed for each role. This single customer account concept will also apply across organizations. One person with one customer account uses that account login to access all roles and permissions. For example, one person could be a DSO at one school, an RO for a different school/program, and an Account Manager for one or more nonimmigrants. Logging into SEVIS II through the one customer account will take the user to a page that allows selection of one of the specific organizations or roles. The user will not have to log out and then log in again to change organizations or roles.

Customer Accounts for Nonimmigrants

Q: How will a student with minimal English language skills create a customer account?

A: SEVP recognizes the challenge of serving this population. SEVP will make the customer account creation process as simple as possible, but there may be cases in which students will need to designate an Account Manager to create the account. Insufficient English proficiency is one of the reasons people will be able to have an Account Manager.

Q: Will current students' records be uploaded to SEVIS II and IINs assigned to them or will current students need to setup customer accounts?

A: Current nonimmigrants in SEVIS, both students and their spouse/dependents, will need to setup customer accounts during the Initial Operating Capability phase of SEVIS II. Nonimmigrants will be given plenty of time to set up their customer accounts and provided with instructions on how to complete the process. Once their account has been created, their COE data from SEVIS will migrate into SEVIS II.

Q: When does the student create a customer account and provide information to a school? Before or after the Certificate of Eligibility (COE) is created?

A: The student <u>must</u> create a customer account before a school can issue a Certificate of Eligibility (COE). The student's IIN is one of the data elements the DSO will need in order to associate that student's record with the school and to pull the student's biographical information into the COE-creation process. The student can create the account at any time.

Q: Are minors (younger than 16) allowed to enter customer information?

A: Nonimmigrants 14 years of age or over will be able to create their own account and legally must sign their own COE. This mirrors the laws regulating visa issuance. Children under the age of 14 cannot create their own account nor sign their own COE. SEVIS II will allow nonimmigrants to have Account Managers who can create customer accounts and sign COEs for individuals who cannot legally sign for themselves.

Q: Will SEVIS II take expired passport dates?

A: Yes, it will allow expired passport dates to be keyed into the system. SEVIS II allows information entry for more than one passport or country. Nonimmigrants need to keep current the information on the passport they use for travel as an F/M/J. As the Form I-94 is phased out by Customs and Border Patrol (CBP), maintaining current, accurate passport information will become even more important.

Q: After a nonimmigrant has obtained a visa, will they be able to change biographical or demographic data themselves?

A: Yes and No. Once a nonimmigrant uses the COE to obtain a visa, thus connecting the account information, the COE information, and the visa information, the identifying biographic data is locked. The consular officer has the ability to overwrite data until the visa has been issued. After visa issuance, changes can only be made to this data through the submission of a helpdesk ticket and requests must be accompanied with supporting documentation. The nonimmigrant may continue to update and change other data in the customer account such as address, telephone, e-mail, etc.

Student and Dependent Access to SEVIS II

Q: What are the DSO's responsibilities in SEVIS II? Will students be responsible for their records?

A: Students are responsible only for creating and updating their customer account which includes biographic, demographic, contact, and employer information. DSOs are not permitted to make changes to the student's customer account. The DSOs retain responsibility for issuing the Certificate of Eligibility, deferring attendance, lengthening and shortening programs, recommending OPT, granting CPT, etc. Two key responsibilities that will move from the DSO to the nonimmigrant are address updates and entering employment information.

Q: If students are responsible for entering their own addresses, will SEVIS II send an error message if the address is incorrect or incomplete?

A: SEVIS II will use an address verification system to verify U.S. addresses. Students will see an error message if a U.S. address appears to be incorrect or incomplete. SEVIS will allow an override of the error notification to accommodate such common occurrences as a new apartment complex with a new zip code or a new housing development with street names that do not yet appear in the verification system.

Q: Will students get any notifications regarding their SEVIS records?

A: Yes. Anytime something happens to their record that will affect their status, they will get an e-mail notification or text message.

Q: What are the penalties for students who misuse the system?

A: There are federal penalties against hacking. Individuals who knowingly report false information are subject to the penalties associated with immigration fraud and could lose their status and face removal.

Q: How will SEVP know if the student is not reporting correctly?

A: Nonimmigrants will periodically be required to enter an affirmative validation that their information is correct. Compliance to this requirement will be monitored. SEVP will also send out reminders to students to check and update their information.

Q: What type of access will dependents have to the system?

A: Just as with the F-1s, M-1s, and J-1s, dependents must create their own customer accounts and electronically sign their own Certificates of Eligibility unless they are under 14 or are otherwise unable to do so. Their access to the overall system is limited. They will be responsible for keeping their own account information up to date and can only view their own records. Dependents who are 14 years of age and older can have full access to their own accounts. Parents can also manage dependent accounts.

Account Managers

Q: Will agents be able to be Account Managers?

A: Yes. Although SEVP has some concerns about this we hope to manage it with ongoing oversight. If we do not allow for Account Managers, we recognize that people who are having difficulty creating and/or managing an account may give someone else inappropriate access to their accounts and allow them to "pretend" to be the account holder, which is a basic and serious security violation. SEVP would rather know that there is an identified Account Manager with specific permissions. SEVP can then monitor Account Manager activities to look for anomalies that might indicate fraud or abuse. SEVP can remove Account Managers as necessary.

Q: Can an agency charge fees to provide service to create accounts?

A: Yes. SEVP will not be able to stop them from charging the fee. However, agents cannot prevent nonimmigrants from creating and accessing their own accounts.

Q: We don't use agents for our ESL students. Will DSOs be able to serve as Account Managers for a student?

A: Yes. DSOs may assume the role of an Account Manager for a student.

Q: Will a school know if an agent was involved in creating the account or managing the account?

A: Schools will be able to see if a student has an Account Manager and the name of the Account Manager, but will not necessarily know if the Account Manager created the account or was added as an Account Manager after the account was established.

Q: Will an Account Manager be able to update address information on the nonimmigrant's behalf?

A: Yes.

Creating Certificates of Eligibility (COE)

Q: Will other staff members be able to review the COE before it is actually submitted? For example, we currently create a draft Form I-20 and pass it to a colleague to review and ensure there are no errors before submitting it in SEVIS.

A: No. Anyone accessing SEVIS to draft or view a COE must be a DSO in SEVIS II. However, you will be able to allow for reviews in SEVIS II and the system will allow the school to set permission levels for DSOs.

Q: How will dependent COEs be created?

A: Before any COE can be created for a dependent, the dependent must have a customer account. A COE for a dependent can be created at the same time that you create the student's COE or it can be created afterwards. Specific questions have been incorporated into the student COE creation process to solicit information on dependents so that COEs for the family may be created at the same time. If a dependent COE needs to be created after a student's COE has already been issued, this can be done simply by clicking a link from the student's record and going through the process for adding dependents.

Q: How does a potential Exchange Visitor apply to our Exchange Visitor Program for their potential research experience?

A: They will apply the same way they do now. SEVIS II does not change how a student or Exchange Visitor applies to your programs. It does, however, change the manner in which SEVIS records, I-20, and DS-2019s are created since the immigration document issuance processes will be entirely electronic.

Q: Must a student demonstrate proof of (non U.S.) citizenship before a school can issue a COE?

A: No, though we highly recommend looking at a copy of the passport the nonimmigrant plans to use to enter in F/M/J status to validate it against the name entered into the SEVIS II Customer Account record.

Q: In reviewing the FMJ record details, does a PDSO/DSO have the right to refuse to issue a COE if they think the student will not be successful? Ex. They failed a previous program at another institution or they have been previously terminated at my institution for unauthorized withdrawal or failure to make normal progress?

A: That is an admission decision as opposed to an immigration decision. It needs to be made by the institution in accordance with their academic standards for admission. SEVP does not tell institutions who they must admit to their programs.

Q: **COEs issued for English as a Second Language students are usually for programs that are short in length and students extend often during their study. How does this work for DSOs in terms of extending COE?**

A: You can do an extension of the program of study or a change of level in SEVIS II.

Programs of Study

Q: **How will SEVIS II capture the majors for each school? Will programs and schools need to submit via the Form I-17?**

A: Institutions will have to submit more detailed information on their programs of study as a part of the I-17. SEVP will make available the tools to complete this well in advance of the SEVIS II release.

Visas

Q: **If the student applied for and received a visa based on signing school A's COE, then is admitted to school B and wants to choose the COE from school B, will the student need to apply for a new visa?**

A: Yes. SEVIS II does not change the current regulatory requirement that the name of the school on the visa and the name of the school on the I-20/COE be the same for a student seeking entry on an initial I-20/COE.

Q: **Does this do away with visa revalidation?**

A: No. Implementation of SEVIS II does not affect the visa revalidation regulations.

Changes of Status

Q: **What happens when a student applies for a change of status (e.g., from H-4 to F-1 or from F-1 to H-4)?**

A: USCIS will be able to obtain real-time data from SEVIS II and will no longer need the paper I-20 in order to adjudicate the change of status. Individuals seeking to change status to F-1 must create a customer account if the individual does not already have one; obtain a COE from a school; pay the SEVIS fee; and submit a change of status application with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS).

Q: **Students sometimes get confused with the change of status process. Do you expect a lot of confused students?**

A: SEVP anticipates that there will be some confusion because the entire process will change. SEVP will continually add new information to the Study in the States website and also turn to the school officials to help inform students.

Transfers from one School to Another

Q: How does a COE for transfer get created?

A: The student will apply to the transfer-in school in the usual manner. The DSO at the transfer-in school will use the student's IIN to associate the student with the transfer-in school and complete and sign a transfer COE.

Q: Will records be created as "initial" students after a student transfers from one institution to another?

A: SEVIS II will have different meanings for "initial." In SEVIS II, the DSO at the transfer-in school will create a "transfer" COE. The student will have an FMJ Status of "Active: Transfer" or "Active: Registration Required," depending on where the student is in the transfer process. If a student ends status at the transfer out school and leaves the U.S., thus ending FMJ status, then this is a not a transfer process. The DSO at the new school will complete and sign an initial COE for a new entry.

Q: What responsibilities do the student and DSO have in the transfer process?

A: The student applies to the institution and provides the IIN. The DSO associates the student to the school as a prospect, creates the transfer COE , and sets a transfer release date. Students will stay active during this time and the transfer-out university will have a very minor role in the process.

Q: Since only one school can receive the transfer student, does that mean that the student must go to the school that issues the first transfer COE? If so, does the student have the option of cancelling that school and getting another transfer Form I-20 through another school?

A: No. The student still has choices about where to go to school. The transfer process will mirror the process for creating initial COEs. Multiple schools can issue COEs to the student. The student is able to wait and see which schools issue COEs and then choose which one to sign. Once the student signs a particular COE, the other COEs will go into dormant status. If the student later has a change of mind, the student can un-sign the signed COE, and contact another school to restore the COE at that school, thus making that COE available for signature.

Q: Since we would not be able to see a terminated record for a transfer student, would we be able to create the COE in SEVIS II? How would this process work?

A: If you get a transfer request from a student who is terminated, you will be able to do the transfer. You would have to do a reinstatement as part of the process.

Q: If a student decided to un-sign their COE and not transfer to your school how does that school know that the student won't be transferring to their school? Does the school

get a notice? You said that the school can sign the COE, but does that mean the school that is losing the transfer student or the school is gaining the student signs off on it?

A: An authorized DSO at the transfer-in school must sign the COE <u>before</u> the student can sign it (all electronically). If a student unsigns a COE, the school gets a notification alert.

Student Employment

Q: Campus employment is allowed incidental to status. Are we going to have to track specific dates for that in SEVIS II?

A: No. You won't have to track specific dates or keep track of whether or not the student is working on campus. SEVIS II provides a new management option. Subject to general rules regarding on-campus employment, SEVIS II will allow a DSO to authorize or prohibit on-campus employment campus wide, and then authorize or prohibit individual on-campus employment different from the campus-wide setting. While most schools will likely choose to leave the default at general authorization (not prohibition), some schools may find this option helpful (e.g., prohibiting work for freshmen or for nursing students, etc.)

The Paperless System, Proof of Status, and the Domestic Report

Q: At NAFSA, they said that some students will need a physical I-20. If this is correct, what students will they be?

A: There will be no physical Forms I-20 after SEVIS II implementation; there will only be an electronic COE.

Q: Since there will be no paper Form I-20, what should the student bring with them at the port of entry?

A: Students should still carry the same documentation they currently present at the port of entry: passport, visa, and financial documentation. Continuing students may also wish to consider carrying a transcript.

Q: How will travel authorizations work? Currently the signature is valid for a year. Will students have to update their COE?

A: In SEVIS II, there will be no travel signatures. As long as a student is maintaining status, the electronic COE will continue to be valid for all usual purposes such as applying for a visa or entering the U.S.

Q: How will DSOs know when a student is traveling if they no longer need a signature?

A: SEVP understands that many schools use the travel signature process as a way to advise students about travel and to maintain communication. With the elimination of the travel signature, there is no way of knowing who is traveling. SEVP will recommend that students check with school officials before they travel. DSOs will be able to look at the

student record and look at entry and exit data received through interfaces with Customs and Border Patrol (CBP). SEVIS II also has an indicator that will show whether the student is in the country or out of the country.

Q: Is the entry/exit information always up to date to the day?

A: No. There is no way that it will always be accurate. There is a lot of work being done to make the entry data available quickly and with more accuracy. Entry and exit data from land and sea ports have improved remarkably since they rely on passenger manifests received from ships and airlines. Land ports remain problematic.

Q: How will the students be able to apply for Social Security Numbers, drivers licenses, etc. without the paper COE?

A: Students will be able to print out a "Domestic Report". This Domestic Report will contain instructions on how to authenticate the information (via website) contained in the document.

Q: Will state and local law enforcement have access to SEVIS II to verify a student's status if they get pulled over?

A: SEVP will work with local law enforcement to educate them on the new Domestic Report which can be used to verify a student's status. The Domestic Report will provide law enforcement personnel with a web site address they can reference for validation. In addition, the Domestic Report can be printed and carried by students. Students can print the Domestic Report as frequently as they want. The Domestic Report is good for 30 days, but students can print a new Domestic Report every 30 days.

Viewing a Student's Participation History

Q: Will DSOs have the ability to see a student's complete history, including records from other programs or universities?

A: Because of privacy concerns, DSOs will only be able to see history at their own institution or limited histories from other institutions

Q: Will school officials have the ability to see periods of authorized employment from previous university records?

A: No. You will not be able to see details on employment authorizations at other organizations. However, you will be able to see information about how much CPT or OPT is available to the student.

Q: Will sponsoring schools be able to see if a participant's previous program ended in termination or a "no show" status?

A: No. This is considered private information.

Q: Will students and scholars be able to designate a DSO and ROs/AROs to see details in the record so we have information with which to advise in a given situation?

A: No. DSOs and AROs will have access to the information on the record that applies to their institution. At their own discretion, students can provide the DSO/ARO with a printout of their own record.

Alerts

Q: Will schools still be able to see alerts (e.g., program end date within 45 days) for students, too?
A: Yes. School Officials will see all alerts for students.

Q: What does "alert due today" mean?
A: It means that something needs to take place on that day. For example, a DSO may have mandatory training due that day. If the DSO fails to complete the training on that day, the DSO's ability to use SEVIS may be suspended.

Q: Do DSOs get e-mail alerts about students or only when they log into SEVIS II?
A: Students will be sent e-mails and will see alerts when they log in. Because of the anticipated number of alerts, DSOs will only get student-related alerts when they log into SEVIS II. They will receive e-mail alerts on matters relating to their own customer account.

Batch Processing

Q: How will SEVIS interface with campus data management (i.e. batch processing)?
A: Batch processing will still be available in SEVIS II. However, since students will also provide information, there will be two-way batch functionality. Batch schema will be available at least 1 year before SEVIS II release. SEVP will be working closely with batch schools.

Q: Will customer Account Manager information for participants be available for sponsors/schools to import in the reverse-batching process?
A: SEVP will give the institution everything that they are entitled to know about that person. This will include customer Account Manager information.

Webinars

Q: Will webinars be about the same topics each month?
A: There will be new topics each month. The Study in the States website (http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/webinars) has a list of the webinars we will be conducting. SEVP will also solicit information about what topics users want to see.

Q: Will there be a webinar series for students?

A: SEVP is unsure and would like to know the opinions of school officials on whether it would be a good idea.

Q: Will DSOs receive an e-mail alert when webinars become available for registration?

A: You can follow Study in the States on Facebook and Twitter, where you will receive updates and notifications.

Miscellaneous

Q: How does SEVIS II compare to immigration systems for students in other countries?

A: Immigration laws and processes vary in different countries. We have not seen a system comparable to SEVIS II.

Q: Will J-1 screens be the same as F and M screens in SEVIS II?

A: The screens will be very similar; however there will be notable differences to account for differences between the programs.

Q: What is this annual DSO training requirement?

A: There will be an annual training requirement for DSOs and PDSOs. The training will be web-based. PDSOs will be expected to take all training and DSOs will be expected to take training based on their permissions. There will be a record of training in DSO's account.

Q: What is the anticipated rollout date of SEVIS II?

A: SEVP is unsure at this point. It will not be 2012 or 2013. Once the DHS review process is complete, SEVP will have a better idea of a timeline.

Q: If the I-94 will no longer be used to track whether or not a students is in and out of country, what happens if a student leaves, but has lost the I-94 or it isn't taken at the flight gate?

A: Sometime late in 2012, CBP will eliminate the paper I-94 and implement a paperless entry/exit management system Procedures for entry/exit at land and sea ports will differ somewhat from the general change for airports. The exit information is electronically captured by the airlines at this time which is how exit information is currently gathered, rather than via I-94s. SEVIS does not currently interpret the exit information, but SEVIS II will.

Q: If there are not going to be I-94s how will programs be able to keep track of what status a student has entered on and how long they are admitted for?

A: SEVP is unsure right now, but SEVP will have a series of meetings with CBP to gather more information. There will be a stamp in the passport with I-94 information on it (no I-94 number on it though). Students will be expected to visit a website to enter personal information and print the I-94 information and number. Doing away with paper forms will save a considerable amount of money. SEVP will communicate more information as decisions are made. An interim final rule will be issued by CBP in the near future.