September 18, 2012 Webinar
(Creating and Updating Customer Accounts)

Questions and Answers

Contents

Design and Accessibility

Q: How much will SEVIS II differ from the current version of SEVIS?

A: From a technical point of view, it is an entirely new system with a new infrastructure that will accommodate a richer user experience. SEVIS II will have a different look and feel and has been designed with the end users (school/sponsor officials and nonimmigrants) in mind. Real Time Interface (RTI) users will notice an improved usability, efficiency, and logic to the system. P/DSOs will notice some improvements immediately in routine tasks such as reporting continuing registration each term. SEVIS II will have the option to register multiple students at one time rather than processing them individually.

Q: Will text fields be limited in the number of characters one can type into them?

A: Yes. As a matter of good practice, the system will have some limits. The length of these fields will be informed by data in SEVIS and by interfaces with other systems. They will not have arbitrarily small limitations on them.

Q: At this time, there are still areas in the world where internet and e-mail are inaccessible or uncommon. How will SEVP address these limitations?

A: SEVP understands that some individuals will not have internet access. One of the reasons for adding the Account Manager functionality is to accommodate these individuals. Users without internet access may enlist the assistance of an individual who does have access. An Account Manager may be a friend, a relative, an official at a school, someone in an Education USA office, or anyone whom the nonimmigrants trust to establish and manage the customer account on their behalf. The users could then claim their customer account once they have access to the internet.

Q: Will the five security questions be asked at every log-in or will they only be used for cases in which users have lost or cannot remember their user name and password?

A: The five security questions will not be asked at every log-in. When users forget their passwords, the system will randomly select from the users' security questions to verify identity before granting a password reset. SEVIS II must meet Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA) standards which will determine how access, passwords, and so on are managed.

Q: How difficult will password requirements be for students?

A: SEVIS II passwords must meet FISMA standards. Current SEVIS password standards are an indication of the type of password that will be required.

Customer Accounts for School and Sponsor Officials

Q: Is the process for creating and updating a customer account the same for DSOs at batch schools as it is for those at schools using Real Time Interface (RTI)?

A: Yes. All school officials will follow the same process in creating their individual customer accounts, regardless of the type of institution where they work. Users can create customer accounts only in RTI. They cannot create customer accounts in batch.

Q: When creating a customer account, where are roles for school officials (PDSO, DSO, etc.) delineated?

A: Roles for individual school officials are not established in the customer account set up process. The customer account relates only to users, not to their roles within SEVIS or their positions at an institution. After the individual has created a customer account, the PDSO uses that user's customer account information to "associate" the user with the institution and to assign the appropriate role (DSO, Batch Specialist, Payer, etc.).

Q: Since users must create an association with a school, who will create that initial association in the case of a PDSO?

A: For schools already in SEVIS, school officials will create their customer accounts during Initial Operating Capability and their roles and permissions will migrate over from SEVIS as legacy data. After that, the Head of School must sign off on any new PDSOs for the school.

For schools seeking initial certification in the SEVIS II environment, whoever creates the I-17 will associate both the PDSO and Head of School as part of the initial application. The initial PDSO is approved by the Head of School and adjudicated as part of the I-17.

Customer Accounts for Nonimmigrants

Q: Will users be able to change their biographical information after creating their customer accounts?

A: Yes. Users will be able to change biographic information until they have given their first electronic signature. After that, their information will be locked and they will need to submit a Help Ticket and appropriate supporting evidence to update information.

Q: Will P/DSOs have the same type of customer account as nonimmigrant students and spouse/dependents?

A: Yes. Their customer accounts are very similar. Since P/DSOS are either U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents, they will not be asked certain questions that nonimmigrants must answer during the customer account set up process. The customer account, itself, simply gives very basic access to SEVIS. Users can view and update their own records, create a customer account for another person (as an Account Manager), and get basic information about SEVIS, apply for school certification and program designation.

The distinctions among P/DSOs, other school officials, students, spouse/dependents, and other nonimmigrants depend on their associations with an institution. Those associations determine the levels of access and permissions they have in SEVIS II, and that information is added to their customer accounts. For example, P/DSOs can see

information for all the students at that school, while students may only see their own records (or records they manage if they are also Account Managers.)

Q: Do all nonimmigrant students regardless of immigration status (H-4, G-4, etc.) have to create customer accounts?

A: No. Only those students who hold or want to obtain F, M, or J status must create a customer account.

Q: Why would a nonimmigrant be asked to list multiple countries under their passport?

A: Nonimmigrants may have multiple citizenships and may have passports from those countries. SEVIS II allows these students the option to list all the passports they hold, even though they may only use one passport at a time to enter the U.S.

Q: Will passport information be verified at the port of entry (POE) and updated or corrected, if necessary?

A: No. This will not be done at the POE. Passport information will be verified by consular officers during the nonimmigrant visa application process. Nonimmigrants can edit passport information in their customer account. Any passport information entered into SEVIS II will be added to the nonimmigrant's history rather than being overwritten. SEVIS II will capture which passport the student uses to enter the U.S.

Q: Why only list "City" and "Village" under birthplace (i.e. why not list town)?

A: If we listed all the types of municipalities, the list would be too long. We chose two common names, but basically we want to know in which municipality the customer account holder was born.

Q: Once a student receives a Social Security Number (SSN), must it be entered into SEVIS II?

A: No. SEVIS II is not going to collect SSNs. Storing SSNs would not only raise the level of system security required by FISMA, but would also drastically increase the cost of developing the system. SEVP does not need to collect the SSN.

Names and the Integrity of Student-Entered Data

Q: Will there be on-screen instructions for naming conventions (e.g. hyphens not allowed)?

A: Yes. SEVP is developing guidance on naming conventions. SEVIS II will have some on screen help and links to larger documents providing guidance.

Q: Under "Additional Names," will there be a space provided to list dates associated with the use of those names?

A: Yes. Anyone adding an additional name will be asked to provide the timeframe associated with the use of that name.

Q: What is the character limit for the "last name" field?

A: We have not yet gotten down to that level of system development. Once a developer has been engaged to develop SEVIS II, we will look at other government systems such as SEVIS, ELIS, and the Department of State systems to determine field links and related naming conventions.

Q: **Until SEVIS II is fully implemented and nonimmigrants with only one name have the option of indicating that they do not have a first or a middle name, should school officials continue to enter the single name into the last name field and enter "FNU" into the first name field?**

A: Yes. P/DSOs should continue to follow existing SEVP guidance on data integrity and naming standards.

Q: **In some languages, "Maiden Name" translates to "Mother's name" rather than "Mother's last name." How will this be addressed?**

A: We had not heard of that particular translation. We will certainly keep that in mind as we write guidance for the field.

Q: **Which name field categories will populate the domestic I-20 (Domestic Report)?**

A: We will not use the term "domestic I-20" as the I-20 is the Government Printing Office-assigned form number for the paper version of the Certificate of Eligibility currently in use. The Domestic Report will be populated by first name, middle name, and last name because that is what is consistent with the other records.

Q: **Will SEVIS II have a U.S. address validation function for domestic addresses?**

A: Yes. SEVIS II will have an address validation function for U.S. addresses.

Q: **Many school residence halls appear as unverifiable addresses in many address validation programs. Will there be an option to confirm addresses in these cases?**

A: Yes. SEVIS II will allow a user to override the invalid address notice and submit the address that was not validated.

Q: **What happens if students do not enter their local U.S. address upon arrival? Will this compromise their legal status in the US?**

A: Students will be notified of their need to enter their address information. P/DSOs will be unable to register new students for the term until the students have provided a U.S. address. Failure to be registered in SEVIS will negatively affect the students' status. Students will receive e-mails and alerts informing them not only of actions they must take to maintain status, but also what they must do should they fall out of status.

Q: **Will students be able to update their e-mail accounts in their customer account?**

A: Yes. Students can update their primary e-mail addresses and provide additional e-mail addresses, if they want.

Q: **Will school officials be informed when students submit Help Tickets to update biographical information?**

A: Yes. P/DSOs will receive alerts notifying them of Help Tickets and correction requests that students have submitted. P/DSOs will also receive notifications of address changes.

Student and Dependent Access to SEVIS II

Q: Will dependents be required to create their own customer accounts?

A: Yes. There must be a customer account for each person entering the country in F, M, or J status.

Q: To what degree will the customer accounts for the principal status holders and their spouse/dependent be linked? For example, will updates to the principal F-1's customer account automatically update the spouse/dependent's customer account?

A: The customer accounts will not be directly linked based only on the existing relationship. Each customer account stands alone. Upon the request of the principal, the PDSO may complete COEs for spouse/dependents, thus associating the spouse/dependents with the principal. Once this relationship is established through the association and COE creation processes, some updates to the principal's record will be reflected in the records of the associated spouse/dependents. Spouse/dependents may also make changes to biographic data in their own records.

Families change, marriages occur or dissolve, children age out, and people seek other nonimmigrant status not associated with the principal. By not linking the customer accounts of family members, SEVIS II recognizes that individuals may be associated with each other at specific times in specific ways that are not permanent. Upon the request of the principal or the spouse/dependent, the P/DSO may remove the association.

Q: Can a nonimmigrant delete a dependent's customer account in situations of marital discord or separations? Are there any concern over how this could affect the F-2 spouse/dependent's legal status and rights?

A: No. Users cannot delete someone else's customer account. Even in instances where the nonimmigrant serves as an Account Manager for a spouse or a dependent, the Account Manager can only end the relationship as an Account Manager, but cannot delete the customer account or sever the spouse/dependent relationship in SEVIS. Spouses and dependents over the age of 13 have the ability to bar their customer accounts from being managed and can request corrections to their customer account if an Account Manager abuses that role by entering false or malicious data.

Nonimmigrants will not have the ability autonomously to disassociate a spouse/dependent from their record. As is the case with SEVIS now, only the P/DSOs have the ability to end the association as a spouse/dependent.

Account Managers

Q: Will educational partners (e.g. recruiters) be required to create customer accounts?

A: No. Recruiters do not need to create customer accounts in SEVIS II to carry out their duties as a recruiter for your institution.

Students may, however, choose to have recruiters serve as their Account Manager to assist in the creation and management of students' customer accounts early in the recruiting, applications, and admission process. All SEVIS II Account Managers must have customer accounts. In such cases, both the school and the recruiter must recognize and draw clear distinctions between recruitment duties performed for the school, and Account Manager functions performed on behalf of the student. The potential for conflicts of interest should be addressed.

Q: **Who is an Account Manager? Who may have an Account Manager? Is anyone required to have an Account Manager?**

A: In the context of SEVIS II, an Account Manager is someone who assists nonimmigrants in establishing and maintaining customer accounts. SEVP recognizes that nonimmigrants may want or need an Account Manager because they are legally underage, lack internet access, lack English proficiency, are medically unable, or simply prefer that someone else manage their customer account. The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act requires an adult parent or guardian to create and manage a customer account for a child under the age of 14. With the exception of children under the age of 14, there is no requirement for anyone to have an Account Manager.

Q: Can the president of the university have an Account Manager?

A: No. Only nonimmigrants can have Account Managers. School officials (Head of School, P/DSOs, IT/Batch specialists, etc.) who have decision making and signature authority may not have Account Managers, which would, in effect, transfer that authority to a third party.

Q: What exactly can an Account Manager do in SEVIS II?

A: The Account Manager's role is limited. They can create customer accounts, but cannot create user names, passwords, or PINs for the customer accounts they manage. Account Managers, including parents, cannot sign any COEs for individuals who are 14 years of age or older. They can view the nonimmigrant's record, report address and employment information, and they can initiate Help Tickets on behalf of the nonimmigrant. All actions they take can be traced back to them in the system's audit trail.

Once the customer account has been created, nonimmigrants aged 14 or over must "claim" their customer accounts before they can sign their COEs. During this process the nonimmigrants create the usernames, passwords, security questions, and PINs that will be associated with their customer accounts. Claiming the customer account does not automatically disassociate the Account Manager.

Account Managers for individuals 14 years old or older are able to serve in that capacity only with the permission of the nonimmigrant. Nonimmigrants aged 14 years and older have the ability to prevent their customer account from being managed. By allowing someone to continue to manage their customer account, they have given permission to that Account Manager to access the information in the record.

Q: Does a student having an Account Manager interfere with the Family Educational

Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)?

A: No. SEVP will link to information so Account Managers can understand the student's SEVIS immigration record. There is a difference between the student's educational record (which is maintained by the school) and the student's immigration record which is maintained in SEVIS. Account Managers only have access to view and to assist students in the management of their electronic immigration record in SEVIS. FERPA still applies to direct communications between the school and the Account Manager, and between the school and the student.

Student aged 14 or older must affirmatively accept an individual as an Account Manager to assist in the management of their immigration record in SEVIS. Students are still responsible for signing their COEs and attestations. They can also prevent their account from being managed.

When a parent serves as an Account Manager, it is very possible that the parent will contact the school with questions about the student's status. Questions regarding the immigration record can quickly lead to questions about the academic program. FERPA most definitely applies in these situations.

Q: Can P/DSOs become Account Managers?

A: Yes. P/DSOs can serve as Account Managers.

Q: Can an F-1 nonimmigrant be an Account Manager for F-2 minors?

A: Yes. The F-1s can be the Account Manager for each spouse/dependent, provided the F-1 nonimmigrants do not have an Account Manager for their own customer accounts. The spouse and dependents aged 14 or over can prevent their customer accounts from being managed.

Q: At what point will Account Managers create customer accounts for themselves, versus creating the customer account for the person whose customer account they are managing?

A: Account Managers must first create their own customer accounts. Account Managers must access SEVIS through their own customer accounts. From there, Account Managers may take the following actions for others: create new customer accounts; manage customer accounts they have created; request to be associated as an Account Manager to a customer account that has already been created by someone else.

Note that students with existing customer accounts do not initiate customer account management in SEVIS. A customer account holder must contact a potential Account Manager, who then makes a request in SEVIS to be associated with that customer account. The customer account holder, upon seeing the request in SEVIS, accepts (or rejects) that Account Manager.

Q: Will there be an "I Don't Know" option on the "Claim Previous Records" page?

A: No. For the initial release of SEVIS II, there is no "I don't know" option for claiming SEVIS records that nonimmigrant may have had in the past. The user must answer YES or NO to the question of whether they have ever been in the U.S. in F, M, or J status. If the

answer is YES, the user is asked to enter at least one SEVIS ID number. At that point, the user may check a box for "I don't know." An option for "I don't know" for the first question is something we can take into consideration for future releases, particularly for instances where Account Managers may create customer accounts.

Q: Will an Account Manager be able to view all of the customer accounts they are managing by logging into SEVIS?

A: Yes. Once logged into SEVIS, the Account Managers will be on their SEVIS home page. From this home page, they can elect to view a list of all their managed customer accounts.

Q: What happens when nonimmigrants are unable to access their managed customer account, for example if they do not know their IIN?

A: Hopefully most nonimmigrants will have a good relationship with their Account Managers. However, in the event that the nonimmigrant did not receive the IIN or has perhaps forgotten it, they can seek assistance from the SEVIS Help Desk or from a DSO at a school with which they have already been associated. Once the nonimmigrants have gained access to their records, nonimmigrants can bar their customer accounts from being managed.

Q: Can a nonimmigrant have more than one Account Manager?

A: Yes. A nonimmigrant can have up to two Account Managers.

Miscellaneous

Q: Will SEVP release a SEVIS II test environment for school officials?

A: We would like to have a training instance of the database available for P/DSOs to gain familiarity with the system. However, we have not yet made a determination on that.

Q: Will this webinar recording be available on the SEVIS II website?

A: Yes. It will be posted on the Study in the States website with the webinar guide and Q&A.

Q: Is there an e-mail address for additional or follow-up questions?

A: Yes. Follow-up questions and comments can be sent to sevisii.team@dhs.gov.

Q: I thought I had signed up for all the webinars, but I didn't get an e-mail reminding me of this webinar. Has something changed?

A: Yes. SEVP has changed webinar software programs and has lost the ability to have advance registration and to send reminder e-mails. You can go to the Study in the States website and follow us on Twitter and Facebook to get updates on upcoming webinars.