

# October 23, 2012 Webinar (Certificates of Eligibility) *Questions and Answers*



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## Implementation Time Line

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**Q: Do you currently have a timeline for selecting a SEVIS II vendor?**

A: No. We do not yet have permission from the Department of Homeland Security to procure a vendor. We are actively seeking this permission, but we must follow strict government procurement procedures.

## Design and Accessibility

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**Q: Will SEVIS II be made available in languages other than English?**

A: No. SEVIS II will be in English only. However, we hope to have some informational materials translated into other languages.

## Student and Spouse/Dependent Access to SEVIS II

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**Q: Will students have the ability to see *who* accesses their record or simply that their record has been accessed?**

A: Nonimmigrants will receive an alert that an official at a certain institution has created an initial prospect relationship. They will not be able to see which school official actually accessed their record.

**Q: Will students be notified each time a P/DSO views their record?**

A: No. Students will not be notified every time a P/DSO accesses their record. They will only be notified upon creation of the initial prospect relationship.

## Batch Processing

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**Q: For users creating Certificates of Eligibility (COE) via batch, how will the justification information be provided when funding is different from the I-17?**

A: This will be part of the batch schema and, just as in Real Time Interface (RTI), P/DSOs must explain the discrepancy. The primary difference is that batch users will only be prompted to provide an explanation if their schools' system is designed to prompt them.

## Certificates of Eligibility

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**Q: What is a COE?**

A: A Certificate of Eligibility is an electronic record that summarizes a nonimmigrant's eligibility to engage in a specific program of study or program of cultural or educational exchange. In the current SEVIS environment, this eligibility is summarized on the I-20 Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status (I-20) or the DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (DS-2019). In the paperless environment of SEVIS II, paper I-20s and DS-2019s will no longer exist, having been replaced by the COE. The terms "I-20," Form "I-20," and so on will also no longer be used, and will be replaced by the electronic COE which can only be accessed through SEVIS II.

**Q: Will school officials have the ability to print the Form I-20?**

A: No. In the SEVIS II environment, there will not be a physical Form I-20.

School officials and nonimmigrants will be able to print a Domestic Report which will contain most of the student's information. Domestic Report is not an official form for immigration purposes. It is designed to meet the nonimmigrant's needs to show current status and employment authorization for purposes such as when it comes to social security numbers, drivers' licenses, bank accounts, apartment leases, etc.

School Officials may also print reports with student information, but these reports cannot be used for immigration purposes.

**Q: When should schools add the Individual Immigration Number (IIN) to the admissions application?**

A: Schools may choose to, but are not required to, ask for the IIN in their admissions applications. Schools may choose how they obtain the IIN for admitted students. We understand that schools need some lead time to make changes to their admissions applications and intake forms. SEVIS II implementation will not begin in 2012 or in 2013. SEVP will notify the user community once the SEVIS II implementation schedule has been determined. Schools will then be able to look at their own deadlines for making formal changes to their applications and intake forms.

**Q: Under "History of Associations," will the school official be able to see if a student has held F-2, M-2, or J-2 status?**

A: Yes. The History of Associations synopsis will display the dates, status, and the name of the sponsoring institution.

**Q: Under "History of Associations," will the school official be able to see if a student has held any nonimmigrant status other than F, M, or J?**

A: No. Only associations while in F, M, and J status will appear in this synopsis.

**Q: Will a school official be able to see other institutions to which a student may be applying?**

A: No. P/DSOs will not be able to see prospective relationships a student may have with

other institutions.

**Q: You mentioned that schools will need to justify costs greater than 10% of the cost associated with the program of study. However, some schools have varying costs for graduate versus undergraduate programs. How will that work in SEVIS II?**

A: In SEVIS II, each academic program will be specifically associated with a level of tuition on the Form I-17. For example, University X's Form I-17 indicates that graduate tuition for a PhD in Philosophy is \$40,000 a year. When creating a COE for a graduate student in that program, a P/DSO at University X would have to provide an explanation when a specific student's costs exceed the \$40,000 associated with the program. This typically happens when a school's tuition has increased, but the tuition figures on the Form I-17 have not been updated.

**Q: Pertaining to the length of programs and cost of attendance: On the Form I-17, how can schools represent the diversity of program lengths and estimated costs, given the fact that we have different educational levels (undergrad/grad, post-grad, program certificates) and how will we be able to represent the cost of attendance?**

A: This webinar focuses solely on the COE issuance process. We did not demonstrate the Form I-17 functionality. In SEVIS II, P/DSOs have the ability to record different tuition levels for different programs. Each program of study must be associated with one of the tuition levels defined on the Form I-17. For example, the school might have different tuitions for undergraduate, graduate PhD, Graduate Masters, professional degrees, and so on. We are aware that some schools have different tuition levels for different years in a program. SEVIS II will not require updates to each student's tuition each year, but will require general updates to financials for certain event such as extending a program, adding a dependent, etc.

The cost of living is not tied to the program cost. The cost of living must be at or above 125% of the poverty level for the geographical area of the school. It must be expressed on the Form I-17 in terms of living costs for a full calendar year. Cost of Living is based on location, not on the student's academic program.

**Q: Will the student be able to view the justification for reduced tuition or living expenses?**

A: No. These justifications will not be visible to the student. Nor will P/DSOs see it in the COE summary.

**Q: What would be an example of a reason for showing lower program costs on the COE than those listed on the Form I-17?**

A: A Catholic university may have lower tuition rates for seminarians than for students who are not pursuing a religious vocation. Employees of the institution may have reduced tuition. In many cases the difference is in nomenclature. School A provides a lower tuition to a certain kind of student. School B charges full tuition to the same kind of student, but then provides funds from the school to off-set the tuition. In each case the student is paying the same tuition and the school's net income is the same, but that information is represented differently on the COE by each school.

How this information is represented is left to the school.

**Q: Most of our students live in low-cost student apartments. How will the cost of living be adjusted for institutions that require students to live in dormitories?**

A: For the Form I-17, schools will need to annualize their cost estimates. Then they need to compare their annualized, estimated costs of living with the poverty level guidelines for their area. Schools may have different costs of living with the values for different programs or schools (for example, X for the divinity school and Y for the MBA program. If the schools' annualized, estimated living expenses for a particular program is at or above 125% of the poverty level for the area then there is not a problem. If it is below the required level, then an explanation is needed.

**Q: What is the difference between program start date and initial session start date?**

A: Program Start Date (PSD) is the date that students are expected to report to the school to begin their F-1 or M-1 programs, and allows for preliminary activities such as orientation. The Initial Session Start Date (ISSD) is the date that instruction that the academic program begins. The initial session start date is used to calculate registration deadlines, just as it is now in SEVIS. Some schools may choose to use the same date for both PSD and ISSD. These are school decisions, and SEVIS will accommodate these school variations.

**Q: Can transfer COEs be created before the transfer release date which is set by the previous school?**

A: Yes. In current SEVIS, the I-20 cannot be created until after the transfer-in school gains access to the student's record on the transfer release date set by the transfer-out school. SEVIS II changes how transfers are processed through the system. The transfer-in school creates the transfer COE and selects the preferred range of dates for the transfer to take effect. The range may be one day (essentially specifying the transfer date) or several weeks or months. The transfer-out school is notified of the impending transfer and has the ability to select a specific transfer release date from the date range. The transfer takes effect either on the date selected by the transfer-out school or on the last date of the range specified by the P/D SO at the transfer-in school, whichever is earlier.

**Q: Will the transfer-in school be able to determine the "release date range" based on a student's circumstances? If so, will the transfer occur on the first or last day of the date range?**

A: Yes. The transfer-in school sets the transfer release date range based on the student's circumstances. The transfer occurs the last date of the range, unless the transfer-out school selects an earlier transfer release date, in which case the transfer occurs on that transfer release date.

**Q: When creating a transfer COE, it appears that the P/D SO must select an explanation of when the transfer is to take place. Two of the options listed, "transfer before completion of program" and "transfer after completion of current term," are not mutually exclusive. Is it possible to select more than one box?**

A: No. P/D SOs can only select one description and must use their judgment to

determine the more accurate description.

**Q: Will P/DSOs receive an alert when students withdraw their signature from their COEs or make their SEVIS fee payments?**

A: P/DSOs will be alerted when students withdraw their signatures from COEs issued for study at their institution. P/DSOs will not be notified when students make payments. Only the students will be notified of their successful payments.

**Q: Can a COE be modified after it has been signed by the student?**

A: No. Once a student has signed the COE, it cannot be modified. It can, however, be deferred for later attendance or withdrawn by the P/DSO, if the modification is for something other than a later arrival date. If P/DSO withdraws the COE, a new COE with corrected information can easily be created.

**Q: Does the 30-day initial reporting deadline calculate from the Initial Session Start Date (ISSD) or from the Program Start Date (PSD)?**

A: The initial reporting deadline is based on the program start date. See *8 CFR 214.3(g)(2)(iii)(C)*.

**Q: After creating COEs for multiple students, can an individual COE from that group be modified?**

A: The ability to modify the COE depends upon its status. If a P/DSO opts to create COEs for several students at once and saves them for later signature, individual COEs can be modified. The P/DSO has the ability to access a list of COEs in draft status, select those to be signed, and sign them. However, once the P/DSO signs the COE, it can no longer be modified. The COE would need to be cancelled (if the nonimmigrant has not yet signed it) or withdrawn (if the nonimmigrant has signed it), and a new COE issued.

**Q: Will P/DSOs be able to create a COE for an F-2 student who will file an application to change status to F-1?**

A: Yes. P/DSOs must create a COE for an F-2 status holder to use in support of the application for Change of Status.

Creation of the COE is not enough to convey F-1 status. The F-2 nonimmigrant must still follow through by filing the application for Change of Status with Citizenship and Immigration Services. Alternatively, the F-2 status holder can leave the U.S., obtain an F-1 visa, and re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status.

## Training and Outreach

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**Q: Will SEVP make SEVIS II tutorials or other types of training materials available?**

A: Yes. SEVP will develop SEVIS II training materials. They will be made available in several ways, such as help inside SEVIS II, links to additional materials from SEVIS II, via the Study in the States website, and other venues that may be developed later.

## Miscellaneous

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**Q: In your SEVIS Model, *Au Pairs* are shown as F's, not J's. Please explain.**

A: This is an error in the mocked-up screen. During our visualization process, raw information was dropped into the tables solely for the purpose of demonstrating how information would appear. Once SEVIS II is actually developed, *Au Pairs* will be displayed as J-1 status holders.

**Q: Will a new student need to present a letter from the P/DSO at the Port of Entry if the student arrives after the program start date indicated in the COE, but before the initial session start date?**

A: A letter should not be required. Port officials will be able to see the Admissibility Indicator that is part of the student's record. The status of the student's Admissibility Indicator will be determined by business rules programmed into the system that draw on information contained in the student's record and on regulatory criteria.