

International student FAQ and COVID-19

Admissions and Accepted Students

We are making exceptions to our regular policies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are well aware of the difficulties many people are facing in submitting documents and making plans to travel to the US. We will return to our regular policies once we get through this difficult time. Until then, the information below may be helpful.

I have not yet completed the admission process because I am unable to get official transcripts from my school. Is there anything I can do?

We will accept transcripts sent to us electronically from a school official. The electronic submission must be sent from a school domain email. The official may also contact us for a more secure way to submit a transcript. This is in effect during the COVID-19 crisis only.

Postal services in some other countries are not open at all places, so does delay in sending my transcripts result in cancellation of my final admission?

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I am admitted, but I have not submitted my official, original financial documents. Is there anything I can do? How should I proceed with my I20 and visa interview procedure without those documents?

- We will accept these documents electronically, but they must be downloaded directly from the financial institution web site.
- If this is not an option, please send a screenshot from the financial institution web site.

If I am unable to arrive for the fall semester, may I defer my admission to spring 2021?

Yes, we can defer your admission to the spring semester. Please contact us at international@sdsmt.edu.

If I can't get a visa and arrive for the spring semester, does South Dakota Mines allow me to defer my admission for a longer period of time?

Yes, we can defer your admission up to one year after admission. Please contact us at international@sdsmt.edu.

If I am unable to arrive for the fall semester and I have a scholarship offer, will I be able to keep it?

Yes, if you take online classes from South Dakota Mines in the fall semester, you can continue to receive your scholarship. If you do not take any South Dakota Mines classes in the fall and defer to spring, you will lose the scholarship.

Scholarships

Due to the global pandemic, I'm planning to defer my admission to the spring semester. Will this affect my student visa and my scholarship? Also, are there any differences between the spring and fall semesters?

- Visa – If you received a visa already and need to defer to the spring semester, you will need a new I-20 with the new start date. You will not need a new visa if it is still valid for the next semester.

- Scholarships – If you start taking online classes from South Dakota Mines in the fall, you can continue to keep your scholarship. However, if you decide to defer to spring 2021 or fall 2021, your scholarship would be revoked.
- There are a few differences between spring and fall semesters. Course availability may be different in each term. There is also a significant difference in the weather. Spring semester begins in January and the weather is much colder at this time of year.

Will the COVID-19 affect the availability of funds for international students?

- Funds – there may be less opportunities for on-campus jobs this coming academic year.
- We do not have funding available for international students.

What will happen if Embassies/Consulates in our homes don't resume processing visa applications in time for fall?

- See 'Obtaining A Visa' section below for more information.
- You may defer to the next available semester.
- You may take classes online for the fall semester. Please contact us for more information at international@sdsmt.edu.

Besides TA and RA for graduate students, what other funding opportunities are available for international students to cover tuition fee.

- We have very limited campus jobs.
- There are no other funding opportunities for international students on campus.

Classes – Online or In Person

I am an international undergraduate or graduate student; in case the situation goes on longer than expected and the travel bans do not get lifted in time for the fall semester?

- Yes, please see the section on 'Obtaining a Visa' for specifics. If there is not an answer to your specific situation, please contact us.
- **If yes, can student receive CPT or OPT?**

You must be on campus in face-to-face classes for one academic year to be eligible for CPT or OPT.

In case of international students, will there be online classes with less costly tuition/fees?

Please review the main South Dakota Mines FAQ page for this information.

<https://www.sdsmt.edu/covid-19/>

Is there an option to defer the admission to next term or not?

Yes, please see the section on 'Obtaining a Visa' for specifics. If there is not an answer to your specific situation, please contact us.

Obtaining a Visa

For Visa Appointment Wait Times, visit: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/wait-times.html>

I cannot apply for my visa because of consulate closures. However, I have a valid tourist visa or qualify for the tourist visa waiver program. Should I come to the US on a tourist visa and file to change status?

NO! This could be considered visa fraud, which has serious consequences. USCIS considers your intent for entering the US on a tourist visa when adjudicating your Change of Status application.

How will I get the I-20 to complete my visa application so I can apply as soon as processing resumes?

- The U.S. Government has allowed for electronic I-20 during the COVID-19 Crisis. You will be allowed to use the electronic I-20 to complete the SEVIS fee and the visa interview.
- The electronic I-20 will allow you entry into the U.S. after you receive your visa.

When will the school start in fall 2020? What if I cannot arrive in the US by that date?

- Classes are scheduled to begin on Wednesday, August 19, 2020. You should be on campus a week before that date to attend orientation, get settled in your new living arrangements, and become familiar with campus and the surrounding area.
- If you are not able to arrive in the US by the start date, you have some options.
 - i. Option 1: Begin classes online**
 1. If your classes have a combination of in class and online options, you can start your classes online
 2. Once you receive your visa, you could arrive in the US during the fall semester and finish your classes in person.
 - a. If you choose this option, you must arrive on campus no later than August 27, 2020. You will need a letter from our office.
 - b. Arrangements are also being made for online orientation. After you arrive in the US, you will need to physically visit our office so we can update your SEVIS record.
 - c. Please note: trying to travel and continue your classes in person can be mentally and physically challenging. Think about what you will need to do to keep up with your studies as well as move to a new country.
 3. If you received a scholarship from South Dakota Mines, you will be allowed to keep your scholarship as long as all classes are taken from South Dakota Mines
 - ii. Option 2: Take online classes for the fall semester and arrive in time for the spring semester**
 1. The fall semester will end on Tuesday, December 8, 2020.
 2. The spring semester tentatively begins on Monday, January 11.
 3. There will be a mandatory in-person orientation to be determined later.
 4. Please note: if you received a scholarship from SD Mines, you will be allowed to keep your scholarship as long as all classes are taken from South Dakota Mines in the fall semester.
 - iii. Option 3: Defer your admission to spring 2021.**
 1. Please note: if you received a scholarship from South Dakota Mines and defer, your scholarship will be revoked.
 - a. There will not be a chance for you to receive a scholarship for the spring 2021 semester.

Traveling to the United States

I am a continuing international student who is supposed to resume classes for fall, but I need to renew my visa. What if I am unable to do that before the start of the fall semester?

You can take classes online for the fall semester. If the lockdown is lifted and the virus has flattened, you may be able to come back to campus to resume classes in person. South Dakota Mines will be offering hybrid classes this fall – part of the time will be in the classroom, and part will be online, but live. You should contact us for more specific information.

Can I enter the US? Travel Restrictions

- There are some travel restrictions with certain countries in addition to no visa interviews. These restrictions will not allow nationals from these countries to enter the U.S. We do not know when these restrictions will be lifted but will keep this site up-to-date when new information becomes available. Please review the “Helpful websites...” section below.
 - i. P.R. China (excluding Hong Kong & Macau), Iran, European Schengen Area, Ireland/United Kingdom, and Brazil.
- Canada and Mexico are limited to essential travel only.
- Proclamation Suspending Entry of Chinese Students and Researchers Connected to PRC “Military-Civil Fusion Strategy” (May 29) – Once you go for a visa interview, you will have a background check done. If they find any connections as indicated, your visa will be rejected. Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do about this. We do not know if this will change.

Helpful websites for travel restrictions:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/from-other-countries.html>
- <https://www.iatatravelcentre.com/international-travel-document-news/1580226297.htm>
- <https://www.fragomen.com/about/news/immigration-update-coronavirus>

For any questions that are not answered above, please contact us at international@sdsmt.edu.