



SEVP Final Guidance:
Conditional Admission, English Proficiency, and the Form I-20
FAQs

The Student and Exchange Visitors Program (SEVP) under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published two final policy guidance documents in July of 2016. They are:

- [SEVP Policy Guidance S13.1: Conditional Admission](#)
- [SEVP Policy Guidance S13.2: The Form I-20 and the English Proficiency Field](#)

Graduate Studies and Graduate Admissions have collaborated with several administrative units on campus, including International Student Services (ISS), the Applied English Center (AEC), and General Counsel (GC), to develop or revise policies and procedures that will ensure KU's compliance with these clarifications of federal requirements. Please refer to the Frequently Asked Questions below to understand how the SEVP final policy guidance will affect your prospective students and your admissions processes.

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1 Frequently Asked Questions

1.1 Basic Information

1.1.1 What is Form I-20?

- It is a DHS form confirming that the student meets all admission eligibility and financial requirements.
- It is sometimes called a Certificate of Eligibility.
- The student uses this form to apply for an F-1 visa at the U.S. Embassy abroad or submits it with a change of status application from within the U.S. to apply for F-1 status.

1.1.2 Who is affected?

- International students seeking to attend KU in F-1 immigration status. These regulations do not apply to international students planning to attend KU in another immigration status.
- This will affect students who are coming in fully funded on a scholarship from their home country or a sponsoring agency, if they seek F-1 status.

1.1.3 What do the final policy guidance documents do?

- Together, they clarify the federal interpretation of language already used in the federal regulations for Form I-20 issuance.
- S13.1 prohibits issuing Form I-20 for provisionally-admitted students seeking F-1 status.
 - Prospective F-1 students must meet “all standards for admission for the program of study listed” in order for KU to issue Form I-20. In other words, they must be granted Regular Admission.
- S13.2 clarifies that “all standards for admission” includes English proficiency.
 - Since KU has an English Proficiency requirement for graduate admission, prospective F-1 students must meet the English proficiency standard for Regular Admission in order to have their Form I-20 issued.

1.1.4 Who will field questions about this change?

- Policy-related questions can be directed to [Amber Roberts Graham](#).
- Admissions Process-related questions can be directed to [Abby Ehling](#).
- Departments seeking an exception to KU’s graduate admission policies due to extenuating circumstances should contact [Amber Roberts Graham](#) for information about the petition process.

1.1.5 Does this change make KU appear less welcoming?

- This change will not differentiate KU from its peers or aspirational peers. Since this is a federally-mandated change, all universities who issue Form I-20 for prospective F-1 students will have to comply.

1.1.6 How many of KU's international students are in F-1 status? Is it the majority?

- KU has approximately 2,300 international students enrolled.
- Nearly 88% are in F-1 status.

1.2 Application Processes

1.2.1 How will this affect students who apply in the future?

- Prospective F-1 students who apply in the future will need to gain Regular Admission in order to have their Form I-20 issued.
- Graduate Studies discourages departments from recommending Provisional Admission for prospective F-1 students.
- Domestic students and international students in other immigration categories will not be affected.

1.2.2 How will this affect students who have already applied?

- A small number of prospective F-1 students were offered Provisional Admission prior to this change but do not plan to enroll until Spring 2017. KU cannot issue Form I-20 to these students as long as they hold a Provisional Admission.
- ISS will contact the affected students and work with them and their departments to assess the options available in each individual's case.

1.2.3 Can a department still recommend Provisional Admission based on departmental requirements?

- Graduate Studies discourages departments from recommending Provisional Admission for prospective F-1 students.
- Departments still can recommend Provisional Admission for any student who does not quite meet any departmental or university-wide admissions criteria. However, students who want F-1 status will not be able to get their Form I-20 if they are admitted provisionally.

1.2.4 How will this affect the interaction between Admission and the AEC Check-In?

- **All** domestic students who indicate English is not their first language and **all** international students must check in with the AEC upon arrival in Kansas. This applies even when they meet the English proficiency standard for Regular Admission and are granted Regular Admission.

- For a variety of reasons, Graduate Admissions at KU maintains a consistent practice of offering only one admission decision per application filed. Therefore, admission decisions will not be re-evaluated or rescinded based upon a student's demonstrated English skills during the AEC Check-In process.
- It is expected that completion of a graduate degree at KU will require ongoing refinement of English skills for **all** students. The proficiency expected at the completion of a program should be greater than that required for admission and beginning graduate work.
- Therefore, **all** international students and non-native English speakers may be required to take English-language coursework as part of their degree program, depending on how they perform during the AEC Check-In process. Students who fail to make adequate progress in their programs, including any required English-language courses, may be dismissed.

1.3 Admission Standards

1.3.1 Will KU change its English proficiency requirements for graduate admission because of this?

- No.
- The AEC re-affirmed in the summer of 2016 that KU's English proficiency standards for graduate admission are appropriate.

1.3.2 How can we assist faculty when they identify a strong applicant who does not meet the new requirements for regular admission? What avenues are available?

- The requirements for admission have not changed: what changed is the federal government's interpretation of whether conditional admission was an adequate basis for issuing Form I-20. KU's standards for Regular Admission remain the same as they have been.
- Faculty may still petition for an exception to the Admission policies on behalf of exceptional applicants. It is expected that exceptional applicants will provide alternative documentation showing that they meet KU's standards for Regular Admission. The Dean of Graduate Studies will continue to evaluate these petitions using KU's established procedures. For assistance with a specific case or developing a petition for exception, please contact [Amber Roberts Graham](#).