



## Evidence Guidelines

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) developed the guidelines in this document to provide additional information regarding required evidence, in accordance with federal regulations, to designated school officials (DSOs) for schools seeking SEVP certification or making updates to the Form I-17, “Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student.”

The evidence described in the guidelines below correspond with the Evidence Checklists that can be found on the [Schools and Programs](#) page at ICE.gov/SEVP. If you are petitioning on behalf of a school seeking initial SEVP certification, review the information under the Certification header. If your school is already SEVP-certified and is making edits to its Form I-17, review the information under the Petition Updates header to locate the appropriate Evidence Checklist for your school.

The evidence below is **not** an exhaustive list. SEVP may issue a Request for Evidence (RFE) to your school through the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) outlining additional information to be provided by a specified due date. All documents are subject to verification.

### Overarching Guidelines

- School officials should regularly review their Form I-17 to ensure compliance with all relevant laws, policies and regulations.
- For English language training programs, U.S. Department of Education recognized accreditation is required per regulation. If English language training is a part of a larger program, please see guidelines below on how to provide this information.
- All evidence must be uploaded at one time using the [Upload Evidence](#) functionality in SEVIS. Evidence documents should not be encrypted, password protected, cannot exceed 10 MB per document and must be in one of the following file formats:
  - .CSV
  - .DOC
  - .DOCX
  - .GIF
  - .JPEG
  - .JPG
  - .PDF
  - .PNG
  - .TXT
  - .XLS
  - .XLSX
- If you are unable to provide a listed item, upload a statement identifying the item and detailing the reason why it cannot be provided.
- If your petition was previously cancelled for an incomplete submission, you must upload all evidence again with your new submission.
- If your Form I-17 is locked in SEVIS—meaning that you are unable to make edits—and you need to report a change, submit a statement detailing the requested edits along with corresponding evidence to [SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVP@ice.dhs.gov). Include your school’s name and school code in the subject line of the email.



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## Accreditation

### *SEVP Identified Accrediting Agencies Evidence (Primary and Secondary Institutions Only)*

- A current copy of either the institution's certificate of accreditation, letter of accreditation, or both from an SEVP identified accrediting agency. The evidence must indicate the specific grades and all locations the school is accredited for and the accreditation effective and expiration or reaffirmation dates.

### *U.S. Department of Education Recognized Accrediting Agencies (Postsecondary Institutions Only)*

- Evidence of accreditation that fulfills the criteria listed below in A: Post-secondary Institutions or B: Schools with English Language Training Program(s) of Study or both is required. If more than one applies to the institution, upload evidence accordingly. The evidence must indicate the effective and expiration or reaffirmation dates of accreditation.

#### **A. Post-secondary Institutions**

A current copy of the institution's certificate of accreditation, letter of accreditation, or both from an U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency. The documentation must include evidence of accreditation for all instructional sites (including the physical address and specific campus name) and all programs for which the school is seeking SEVP certification.

#### **B. Schools with English Language Training Program(s) of Study**

A current copy of the institution's certificate of accreditation, letter of accreditation or both from an U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body that specifically lists the English language program and all instructional sites where the program(s) are offered.

## Attendance Policy Outline

- A detailed outline of the school's attendance policy. If the attendance policy is located within the institution's catalog, please note where in the catalog it is located and upload the catalog in PDF format. If the attendance policy is not included within the catalog, upload documentation outlining the policy.

## Evidence in Lieu of Accreditation

### *Non-Accredited Post-Secondary Programs (F Classification)*

- A minimum of three (verifiable) pieces of evidence that fulfill the criteria listed in A: Acceptance Letters, B: Articulation Agreements or C: State-issued Professional Licenses below is required. **Each program listed on the Form I-17 must be referenced in separate documents.**



Therefore, it is possible that more than three pieces of evidence are required to ensure that each program is referenced. If uploading letters, articulation agreements, or both, each must be from different institutions that are either owned or operated as public educational institutions or accredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency. SEVP seeks evidence pertaining to students who have graduated or transferred from the petitioning school within the two years immediately prior to the submission of the evidence. Students referenced in the records provided are not required to be F-1 or otherwise nonimmigrant students. Additionally, only **ONE** document from an entity associated with the petitioning school will be accepted.

### A. Acceptance Letters

All letters must be on the accepting institution's letterhead and include the following:

- Signature(s) of the appropriate school official(s) (a school employee or representative with legal authority to issue an official school record).
- Name of the accepting school's U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body.
- Name of the petitioning institution.
- Student's name.
- Program of study pursued (transferable credits earned) at the petitioning school and program of study entered at the accepting school.
- Student's graduation/transfer date.
- Accepting school's attestation of acceptance and continued unconditional acceptance of credits earned from the petitioning school.
- Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence within the last **two years**. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

### B. Articulation Agreement(s)

Agreements between the petitioning school and a school owned or operated as a public educational institution or accredited by a U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency must indicate the following:

- Program name from the petitioning school and the program name from the accepting school into which the credits will transfer.
- Accepting school's attestation that credits earned at the petitioning school are unconditionally recognized by and transferrable to the accepting school.
- Effective date and expiration date of agreement (if applicable).
- Signature(s) of the appropriate school official(s) at petitioning school and accepting school (a school employee or representative with legal authority to issue an official school record).
- Evidence proving students attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).



### C. State-issued Professional Licenses

Due to a lack of formal education opportunities at the next level with certain professional, graduate, or doctoral programs, SEVP has historically considered submission of state-issued professional licenses related to the school's program to comply with the requirements of *8 CFR 214.3(b)* and *(c)*. A postsecondary school may upload copies of state-issued professional licenses its graduates (not limited to nonimmigrant students) have received as a result of completing the program of study for which it is seeking approval.

- The graduate who received the license must have completed the program within the last two years.
- The school should upload at least one license for each program for which it is seeking certification on the Form I-17 or other evidence that its credits have been and are accepted unconditionally by a postsecondary school that confers such degrees.
- Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

#### *Non-Accredited Vocational Programs (M Classification)*

- A minimum of three (verifiable) pieces of evidence that fulfill the criteria listed in A: Proof of Employment or B: State-issued Professional Licenses below are required. **Each program listed on the Form I-17 must be referenced in separate documents.**

Therefore, it is possible that more than three pieces of evidence are required to ensure that each program is referenced. If uploading employment letters, each letter must be from a different employer. SEVP seeks evidence pertaining to students who have graduated or transferred from the petitioning school within the two years immediately prior to submission of the evidence. Students referenced in the records provided are not required to be M-1 or otherwise nonimmigrant students. Additionally, only **ONE** document from an entity associated with the petitioning school will be accepted.

#### A. Proof of Employment

Due to vocational programs traditionally preparing students for vocational careers or other technical occupations, rather than further education, SEVP considers proof of graduate employment related to the school's program to comply with the requirements of *8 CFR 214.3(b)* and *(c)*. The graduate's employment must be in the United States. A school may upload proof of employment obtained by any of its graduates, including but not limited to its nonimmigrant students. SEVP does not accept letters from persons who are self-employed as evidence in lieu. Employment letters must include the following:

- Employer's letterhead, business address, phone number and the direct contact information (phone number or email) of the letter author.
- Student's field of employment that directly relates to their program and the course of study for which the school is seeking certification on the Form I-17.



- Signature of the letter author and the author's title or position within the employer's organization.
- Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence within the last two years. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

## B. State-issued Professional Licenses

Due to the requirement of obtaining state-issued licensure for many vocational careers in certain states, SEVP has historically considered submission of state-issued professional licenses to comply with the requirements of *8 CFR 214.3(b)* and *(c)*. A vocational school may upload copies of state-issued professional licenses its graduates (not limited to nonimmigrant students) have received that directly relate to the program of study for which it is seeking approval.

- The graduate who received the license must have completed the program within the last two years.
- The school should upload at least one license for each program for which it is seeking certification on the Form I-17.
- Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

## Kindergarten through Grade 12

- A minimum of three (verifiable) pieces of evidence that fulfill the criteria listed in A: Proof of Student Transfer to Next Grade Level or B: Proof of Acceptance to Postsecondary School below are required. **Each program listed on the Form I-17 must be referenced in separate documents.**

At least one letter must reference the highest-grade level listed on the Form I-17 petition. Each letter must be from different institutions that are either owned or operated as public educational institutions or accredited by an U.S. Department of Education recognized or SEVP identified accrediting agency. SEVP seeks evidence pertaining to students who have graduated or transferred from the petitioning school within the two years immediately prior to submission of the evidence. Students referenced in the records provided are not required to be F-1 nonimmigrant students or otherwise nonimmigrant students. Additionally, only **ONE** document from an entity associated with the petitioning school will be accepted.

### A. Proof of Student Transfer to the Next Grade Level

Private kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) schools may upload proof of student (not limited to nonimmigrant students) transfer to the next grade level in a public school or in a school accredited by an SEVP identified accrediting agency. The proof of transfer must meet all the following requirements:

- Be on the receiving school's letterhead.





- State its SEVP identified accrediting agency or that it is a public school.
- Include the complete name of the student and grade level of completion.
- Date completed at the petitioning school must be within the last two years.
- Include the grade level entered at the receiving school and date of entry.
- Include the name of the petitioning school.
- Have attestation of transfer with signature of the issuing official (a school employee or representative with legal authority to issue an official school record).
- Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence within the last two years. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

## B. Proof of Acceptance to a Postsecondary School

Private schools that are petitioning for grade 12 certification (alone or together with any other grade levels) and issue secondary school diplomas may alternately and/or additionally upload proof of its graduates' (not limited to nonimmigrant students) acceptance by a postsecondary school, such as a college, university or vocational school. The proof of acceptance must meet the following requirements.

- An U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting agency must accredit the postsecondary school.
- The student must have graduated or completed the program within the last two years.
- Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

## Explanatory Statement for Edits to the Form I-17

- A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the principal designated school official (PDSO) explaining the edit(s) made to the Form -17. For multiple edits to the Form I-17, you may upload all explanatory statements in one document, differentiating each edit by field name.

## Facilities Information

For a new location or changes to an SEVP-certified physical address, upload each of the following:

- **Physical location:** Description of the facilities, including the number of classrooms used for instruction, the maximum capacity of each classroom, the purpose of each classroom (for example, instruction, lab, computer), and a labeled floor plan of each building and floor.
- **Capacity:** Official document(s) issued by either the fire marshal or other state or county government body indicating the maximum capacity for each building of the school, for each location listed on the Form I-17.
- A copy of the rental or lease agreement (if leasing space).





If editing the physical address of an SEVP-certified record location or instructional site (and there is no actual change of location), upload each of the following:

- A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO explaining the edit(s) made.
- Proof that there has been no actual change of location and the school remains at its same location or campus site.

## Federal Aviation Administration Certification

### *FAA Part 141 or FAA Part 141 and 142 providers*

Upload the following:

- Letters of Authorization (LOA) A001, “Issuance and Applicability” (formerly the certificate) signed by both the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and a designated person for the school.
- LOA A004 “Summary of Authorizations and Limitations” includes authorization to:
  - Enter into training agreements with 14 CFR Part 142 training centers and institutions of higher education or both.
  - Conduct training at satellite bases.
- LOA B001 “Pilot School Ratings” authorized Certification and Rating Courses, in accordance with 14 CFR Part 141, § 141.11(b)(1).

### *FAA Part 142 only*

Upload the following:

- FAA Part 142 Training Center Certificate.
- Official letter/list of FAA-approved programs.
- LOA A031, Training Agreements (if applicable).
  - Training agreements with the 14 CFR Part 142 training center(s) or their satellites.
  - Training Agreements with Institution(s) of Higher Education.

**NOTE:** An FAA Part 141 LOA A001 denoting **provisional** approval is **not** acceptable for initial SEVP certification or if adding a flight training program of study to an already SEVP-certified petition. If an already SEVP-certified flight training program is placed in provisional status, the school should upload an explanation detailing why the school was placed in provisional status.

## Financial Information

- A copy of your institution’s Certified Financial Statement, signed by its accountant. The statement must be the most recent statement within one calendar year. Tax documents are NOT accepted.

## Form I-17: Signed

- Upload the Form I-17 in its entirety. The last two sections of the Form I-17 require the signatures as listed below:



- The Form I-17 continuation page, Certification and Signature by President, Owner, or Head of School, requires the signature of the president, owner, head of school or school system. **For DSO updates, the PDSO may sign this page.**
- The Form I-17A, “Record of Designated School Officials,” is the last page(s) of the Form I-17 and requires the signature(s) of each person listed as a DSO on the petition. **For DSO updates, only the new DSO needs to sign in this section.**

**NOTE:** For schools seeking initial SEVP certification, draft versions of the Form I-17 are **NOT** accepted.

### Grading Policy Outline

- A detailed outline of the school’s grading policy. If the grading policy can be found in the institution’s catalog, please note where in the catalog it is located and upload the catalog in PDF format. If the grading policy is not included within the catalog, upload documentation outlining the policy.

### Ownership Information

- Legal documentation demonstrating ownership of the school (for example, articles of incorporation showing the share ownership, share purchase agreements, limited partnership or partnership agreement, sole proprietorship documents, and most recent Bill of Sale or all the forementioned documents). If the institution is doing business under another or assumed name (DBA), also upload evidence of the fictitious name.
- If making an edit to the ownership and there is no actual change in ownership, upload each of the following:
  - A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO explaining the edit(s) made.
  - Proof that there has been no actual change of ownership (see examples above) and the school remains under the same ownership as listed on the approved Form I-17.

### Payment

For more information regarding SEVP’s fee requirements, refer to the [Form I-17 - Pay Fees](#) page on Study in the States.

### Required Fees

For schools seeking initial SEVP certification, the fees are as follows:

Fee	Price
Filing Fee <b>NOTE:</b> Fee is non-refundable	\$3,000
Site Visit Fee <b>NOTE:</b> Required for EACH location listed on the Form I-17, non-refundable once a site visit is completed	\$655



For schools SEVP-certified schools, the fees are as follows:

Fee	Price
Ownership Change Fee <b>NOTE:</b> Fee is non-refundable	\$3,000
Site Visit Fee <b>NOTE:</b> Required for EACH location change or location added to the Form I-17, non-refundable once a site visit is completed	\$655
Recertification Filing Fee	\$1,250

### *Payment*

To make a payment, go to [Pay.gov](https://www.pay.gov). In the Search Public Forms box, type SEVIS and click enter. Click on the link to the form and follow the instructions.

### *Proof of Payment*

Once payment has been made, save a copy of your receipt in PDF format to upload as evidence in SEVIS when submitting your application.

## **Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Statement**

- A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO and head of school, attesting that your institution will not issue Forms I-20 for pre-K education.

## **Program of Study Description(s)**

### *Post-Secondary Schools*

A program of study description must be uploaded for **EACH** program for which your school is seeking approval to issue Forms I-20 **in the format below** and include the following information:

- Program name.
- Degree type (if non-degree, specify non-degree program type).
- Visa classification (F academic and language **OR** M vocational or technical).
- Date on which instruction of the program **ORIGINALLY** began at your school.
- Mode of delivery (for example, is the program in-person, online, distance, hybrid or low residency).

**NOTE:** For F programs only, if any of the programs have a hybrid, low residency, online component(s) or both, you will need to provide a breakdown of the total credit or clock hours of



either hybrid, low residency, online instruction or all per academic session. See next bullet “program hours.”

- Program hours:
  - **For credit hour programs:** Indicate the total credit hours a full-time student must take each academic session and the time (in days/weeks/months/years) necessary to complete the program. Provide a breakdown of the total credit hours per academic session into the following categories: lecture, lab, employment, internship/externship, and curricular practical training, if applicable.
  - **For clock hour programs:** List the total clock hours for **EACH** week and the number of weeks it takes to complete the program. Provide a breakdown of the total clock hours per week into the following categories: lecture, lab, employment, internship/externship, and curricular practical training, if applicable.
  - **For F programs only:** If any of the programs have a hybrid, low residency, and online component(s) or both, provide a breakdown of the total credit or clock hours of either hybrid, low residency, online instruction or all per academic session.
  - **For programs where there is a difference between coursework conducted in clock and credit hours (for example, one program component is calculated in clock hours and another in credit hours):** The school must provide SEVP evidence showing equivalency to meet the credit or clock hour requirements of *8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(A), (B), or (D)* from a combination of the two components.
- Instructional site(s) at which the program(s) will be taught, including the address(es).
- Admission standards and enrollment criteria.

### ***K-12 and Public High Schools***

A program of study description must be uploaded for **EACH** education level (for example, elementary, middle and high school) for which your school is seeking approval to issue Forms I-20 **in the format below** and include the following information:

- Specific grade levels.
- Mode of delivery (for example, is the program in-person, online, distance or hybrid).
- Time necessary to complete each grade level (for example, grade level 8 – 1 year).
- Date, to include month and year, in which instruction in each program initially began after the school’s establishment.
- Instructional site(s) at which the grade level(s) will be taught, including the address(es).
- Admission standards and enrollment criteria.

### ***Flight Schools***

- Click on the PDF worksheet, [Programs of Study - Flight School Worksheet](#). **Read and complete the worksheet, in its entirety, electronically.**
  - A Programs of Study – Flight School Worksheet must be completed for **EACH** M-1 flight training program of study (certificate, rating or both) for which your school is seeking approval to issue a Form I-20.



- If your school seeks to offer a program of study that combines more than one certificate, rating, or both, an additional Programs of Study – Flight School Worksheet must be completed for **EACH** combined program of study.
- Include ALL the actual hours that students are engaged in instruction or lab work at your institution **EACH** week and not just the FAA minimum hours.
- Include supervised hours involved in ground school, flight time, pre/post debriefing, stage checks, examinations, etc. and ensure the totals in each section correspond to avoid delayed adjudication.
- All Programs of Study – Flight School Worksheet information must correspond with the Degrees and Courses of Study listed in Fields 2.3 and 2.4 on the Form I-17.
- For providers that are both FAA part 141 and 142 certified: List those programs of study obtained in simulators only (i.e., Part 142) separately on an additional Programs of Study – Flight School Worksheet must be completed.

## Proof of U.S. Citizenship or Lawful Permanent Resident Status

The following documents are accepted as proof of U.S. Citizenship or Lawful Permanent Residence for a DSO nominee. School officials may choose one of the following options for submission:

- U.S. passport or passport card (current or expired).
- U.S. birth certificate or birth certificate card issued by a State Body.
- Alien registration card; naturalization/citizenship certificate.

The school official's name listed in SEVIS must be the person's full legal name as listed on the document uploaded as proof of U.S. Citizenship or Lawful Permanent Resident Status. Nicknames are not permitted. If the full legal name of the person is not the same as the name listed on one of the acceptable document options listed above, additional evidence is required.

Proof of name change documents accepted:

- Certified name change document, such as a marriage certificate, divorce decree or court order.
- SEVP will not accept driver's licenses, hospital birth records or social security cards.

## Removal Statement

- A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO explaining the request to remove information from the Form I-17.
  - **Facilities removal:** A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO explaining the request to remove an instructional site(s). The statement must include the name of the instructional site(s) the school is requesting to be removed, confirmation that there are no nonimmigrant students enrolled in any program(s) of study or attending the instructional site(s) being removed, and the school will not issue Forms I-20 for any program(s) at the instructional site(s) once removed from the Form I-17.



- **Program of study removal:** A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO explaining the request to remove a program(s) of study from the Form I-17. The statement must include the name of the program(s) the school is requesting to be removed, confirmation that there are no nonimmigrant students enrolled in the program(s) of study, and the school will not issue Forms I-20 for the program(s) of study once removed from the Form I-17.

## School Catalog

- A recent copy of your school's catalog in PDF format.

**NOTE:** For K-12 and public high schools, if your school does not have a catalog, upload a copy of the school's handbook or equivalent.

## School Type Information

- A business license or Internal Revenue Service tax documentation indicating the operation of your institution as a For-Profit or Non-Profit entity.

## State Recognition or Proof of Exemption

### State Recognition

- Documentation issued by the applicable state educational oversight body showing the school has authorization to operate in that state.

### Proof of Exemption

- Documentation issued by the applicable state educational oversight body showing the school is exempt from obtaining authorization to operate in the state.  
**OR**
- Evidence of the statute, regulation or law that exempts your school from obtaining authorization to operate in the state.

## Nonpublic K-12: Compulsory Attendance

- A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO attesting that attendance at the petitioning institution satisfies the compulsory attendance requirements of the state in which it is located.
  - If your state educational oversight body requires that each location or program of study taught at the school be recognized or exempted from recognition, evidence of this must be provided as well.
  - In lieu of state licensing, a postsecondary school which offers courses recognized by a state-approving agency as appropriate for study for veterans under the provisions of 38 USC 3675 and 3676, may upload a statement of recognition signed by the appropriate official of the state approving agency.



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## **Teacher(s) Qualification Descriptions**

For each member of the teaching staff, upload the following information:

- Educational, vocational, or professional qualifications (by name).
- Salary of each instructor (by name).
- Current responsibilities at the school (by name).
- Amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students.  
Examples of this include any access to guidance counselors or other student services at the petitioning school and the office hours.





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## Resources

### *Study in the States Resources*

Refer to the following resources on [Study in the States](#) for additional information:

- [Form I-17 - Pay Fees](#)
- [Form I-17: Upload Evidence](#)
- [Programs of Study - Flight School Worksheet](#)
- [SEVP Fact Sheet: for Designated School Official Submissions](#)
- [SEVIS Job Aid: Update School Officials](#)

### *SEVP Policy Guidance*

Refer to the following policy guidance documents for additional information:

- [SEVP Policy Guidance S1.2: Evidentiary Requirements for Schools Not Meeting Eligibility Criteria in 8 CFR 214.3 \(b\) and \(c\)](#)
- [SEVP Policy Guidance for Adjudicators 1207-04: Flight Training Providers](#)
- [SEVP Policy Guidance S7.2: Pathway Programs for Reasons of English Proficiency](#)
- [SEVP Policy Guidance S4.3: Change of Ownership](#)
- [SEVP Policy Guidance for Adjudicators 1003-03: Reporting Instructional Sites](#)

All SEVP policy guidance documents are available on the Schools and Programs page at [ICE.gov/SEVIS/Schools](https://ice.dhs.gov/SEVIS/Schools), in the Policy drop down under the Resources header.

### *SEVP Response Center Contact Information*

For general SEVP questions, case-specific questions and SEVIS technical help, contact the SEVP Response Center (SRC). SRC offices are open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. ET, except federal holidays.

- **Telephone:**
  - 703-603-3400 or 1-800-892-4829 for general and case-specific questions.
- **Email:**
  - [SEVP@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVP@ice.dhs.gov) for general questions.
  - [SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov](mailto:SEVISHelpDesk@ice.dhs.gov) for SEVIS technical questions