



On March 17, 2021, Holy Cross President, Philip L. Boroughs, SJ, [announced](#) that the College is planning for fully in-person instruction and activities in Fall 2021. (Full implementation of this decision is dependent upon local, state, and federal health and safety regulations that are in place in August 2021.)

These FAQs are exclusively for advisory purposes and are not legal or medical advice. They address international issues for international students as a supplement to the official information provided to all Holy Cross students on [the College's official website](#).

These FAQs were last updated on July 1, 2021, 4:10 p.m./ET. New information in **highlighted**. Please consult [the official College website](#) and US government sources, below, for up-to-the-minute information. *Thank you.*

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## F-1 VISA, FORM I-20 & PASSPORT FAQs – updated 7/1/2021

1. **I am a RETURNING Holy Cross student (Class of '22, '23 or '24): Do I need a new Form I-20?**
  - You are responsible for checking your I-20 before you travel.
    - i. Page 1 – Is your major(s) correct? If not, contact [Dean Tina](#) for a new I-20.
    - ii. Page 2 – Ideally the date of the most recent "travel" authorization should be 2021. If you need a new travel signature, contact [Dean Tina](#) at least 1 week before you intend to travel.
  - You must always save your previous I-20s and travel with the most current one only.
2. **I am a NEW, Class of 2025 or transfer student from another US college. How will I get my I-20?**
  - All I-20s have been issued for new students and hard copies will be shipped to you during the first week of July. (These are simply extra copies for you.)
  - If you have NOT received your I-20, please contact [Dean Tina](#) *immediately*.
3. **I need a new F-1 visa or must renew my visa---but the US Embassy/Consulate is only taking emergency appointments. What should I do?**
  - **Most students are receiving visa appointments as of June 30.**
  - Unfortunately, if you have not received your appointment, there is little you can do except wait and keep [Dean Tina](#) updated. Here is the official [US Department of State website](#) where you can check on your local US embassy/consulate visa appointment schedule.
4. **My passport expires in 2021. When do I need to get a new one?**
  - The U.S. guideline is that your passport should be valid for at least 6 months *after* the date you enter the U.S. For example, if you are entering on August 20 2021, the expiry date on your passport should be on or after February 20, 2022.
  - Every country has different procedures for renewing a passport. Check with the proper officials in your home country to determine when you should apply for a new passport.
5. **I am a current Holy Cross student who has been studying in my home country. Does the "5-month rule" that says F-1 students cannot be outside the U.S. for more than 5 months apply to me?**
  - The "5-month rule" is suspended during to the COVID-19 emergency and *while the College providing exclusively on-line or hybrid instruction*. Therefore, even if you are outside the U.S. for 5 months or more, your F-1 visa status and I-20 will remain legal and active as long as you obey all the regulations.
6. **My I-20 has a digital signature. Will that be a problem when I go to get my visa or when I try to enter the US?**
  - An electronically issued I-20 with a digital signature is perfectly fine. There is a reference on your I-20 for the regulation confirming this. You may need to politely point it out to the State Department or Customs & Border Protection (CBP) official if they have any concerns.

## TRAVEL FAQs – updated 7/1/21

### 7. Have the travel bans been lifted for European travelers or travel/transit through Europe?

- For official information, you must check the [US Department of State website](#)
- Currently, only essential travel is permitted from **Schengen countries, the UK, and Ireland.**
- F-1 students have a special, automatic exemption to be considered “essential travelers”.
- **NO special paperwork** (such as a “national interest exemption”) is **required**, only a valid US F-1 visa and valid I-20.

### 8. What about the travel bans for Brazil, China, Iran, and South Africa? Do these apply to me?

- The bans on non-essential, direct travel from these countries are still in effect. **HOWEVER, as of April 26<sup>th</sup>, the US Department of State is giving automatic exceptions as long as:**
  - i. You hold a **valid F-1 visa**
  - ii. You will be **entering the US** to begin or continue your studies or OPT **on or after August 2, 2021 or (for newly admitted students) the “earliest admission date” printed on your I-20.** If you have questions, please contact Dean Tina.
- The travel bans depend on *where* you are coming from (and *not* on your nationality or passport, unless you are a US citizen). Since early in the COVID-19 pandemic, for public health reasons the U.S. has banned entry to people who have been in certain countries within the immediately preceding 14 days. This includes *every* country you visit, from the point of origin to every airport through which you “transit” during your trip to the U.S.
- Keep in mind that depending upon your *passport/nationality* you may also require a “transit visa” to board a plane that will transit through or stay in hotels in other countries. You should check with your airline or government to learn whether transit visas are required in your specific case.
- Here are links to several official US government sites where you can learn the status of each country through which you will travel or transit.
  - [US Centers for Disease Control](#)
  - [US Department of State](#)
  - [International Air Transport Association](#) – site used by airlines to determine who can board planes to specific destinations

### 9. ALL international travelers entering the US by air on or after Jan. 26, 2021, must have written proof of a negative COVID-19 test or COVID-19 recovery.

Without the required documentation, the airline will NOT allow you on the plane. This applies to equally to US citizens, permanent residents, and F-1 visa students.

### 10. Do I need to print a copy of my Fall 2021 course schedule and carry it with me when I travel into the U.S.?

- Yes, in addition to your other travel documents it is always a good idea to carry your current course schedule and an unofficial copy of your Holy Cross transcript (which you can download and print for yourself from STAR/My Academics.)

### 11. I’m Canadian. Are there travel restrictions I need to know about?

- Canadian citizens obtain their visas *at the Canadian-U.S. border and no appointment is currently required.*

- Canadian students with F-1 visas are allowed to enter the U.S. by land/ferry under the exception for essential travel in order to attend school. This policy has been in place since last year.
  - Please check the US Customs and Border Protection website for current information. **As of June 23, 2021** there are different rules for LAND/SEA BORDER crossings and crossing by air travel.
    - i. **Land/sea border information:** Currently only F-1 students (and not their families) traveling to attend classes are exempted from the “essential travel” rule: [https://help.cbp.gov/s/article/Article-1596?language=en\\_US](https://help.cbp.gov/s/article/Article-1596?language=en_US)
    - ii. **Air travel information:** Air travel from Canada to the U.S. currently has no additional restrictions beyond those required for all air travelers entering the US (see FAQ #9): [https://help.cbp.gov/s/article/Article-1688?language=en\\_US](https://help.cbp.gov/s/article/Article-1688?language=en_US)
- 12. Please read about COVID-19 vaccination and quarantine requirements, below.**

## COVID-19 VACCINATION AND QUARANTINE FAQs – updated 7/1/2021

**All Holy Cross students are responsible for keeping up to date on COVID-19 policies by regularly reading the College’s [COVID-19 website](#).**

- 13. Will I be required to have a COVID-19 vaccine before coming to Holy Cross in Fall 2021?**
- a. YES. [On April 27<sup>th</sup> President Boroughs announced](#) that all students must be vaccinated against COVID-19.
  - b. If you are unable to receive a vaccine in your home country before coming to Holy Cross, the College will assist you in obtaining a free vaccine after you arrive on campus. **You will be required to quarantine upon arrival to the U.S..**
- 14. Will the College accept non-US vaccines?**
- a. Yes. The College accepts [all vaccines that are approved by the World Health Organization](#) (WHO).
- 15. Who is required to quarantine after arriving in the U.S.?**
- According to Holy Cross Health Services, you are required to quarantine if:
- a. you have not received any COVID vaccine *OR*
  - b. you have not received both doses of a two-dose vaccine *OR*
  - c. you received the full series of vaccines but the last dose was less than 14 days before you arrive in the U.S. *OR*
  - d. you received a non-[WHO-approved](#) vaccine
- 16. If I am required to quarantine, may I quarantine on campus or do I have to pay for a quarantine hotel?**
- a. You may request to quarantine on campus.
  - b. **To request quarantine housing, meals, and PCR tests on campus you MUST submit [this Google form](#) no later than 11:59 PM/ET on July 9.**
  - c. You will be informed whether your request is approved by July 14. If you are approved for quarantine on campus, Holy Cross will arrange to pick you up at Boston Logan airport.
  - d. Late requests may be denied. In that case you would have to pay for your own quarantine housing, meals, and PCR test.

## ACADEMIC FAQs

- 17. Should I enroll in in-person classes even if I am unsure whether I can come to campus?**
- Yes. Right now in-person classes are the only option. These FAQs will be updated over the summer as additional information becomes available.
- 18. Am I eligible for a “gap year”? If so, what is involved?**
- If you are a new student (Class of 2025 or transfer)** you would actually be “deferring” your enrollment at Holy Cross, not taking a “gap year”. You must contact Admissions to request to defer your enrollment.
  - Every current Holy Cross student has the option to take a semester or more off, called a “leave of absence.”** Consult the [Holy Cross catalog](#) and contact your Class Dean to request a leave of absence.
  - You must also inform [Dean Tina](#) at the same time you request a gap year.
- 19. What are the visa implications of taking a “gap year”/ “leave of absence”?**
- When you go on leave, your I-20 must be terminated. This carries NO penalty of any kind for your visa record.
  - Your F-1 visa remains valid until the printed expiry date.
  - You will not be allowed to enter the US on your F-1 visa until you are officially returned from your leave of absence since your I-20 will not be active.
  - After taking a leave of absence you would have to wait 1 full academic year before you would be eligible for *off-campus* work authorization (e.g., internships, off-campus employment, CPT/OPT).
  - Please read the FAQ below about re-activating your I-20 in a future semester.
- 20. What must I do to reactivate my I-20 after a gap year or leave of absence?**
- Please read the FAQ above about the visa implications of taking a “gap year”.
  - You must inform [Dean Tina](#) at the same time you contact your Class Dean about returning/coming to campus.
  - To receive a new I-20 for your return from LOA—and depending on how long your leave of absence lasted—you might, unfortunately, have to pay a new SEVIS fee to establish a new SEVIS account.
  - If you must establish a new SEVIS account, it is the same as when you first entered Holy Cross:
    - You would be required to provide financial documents and a letter from your parents that they will be responsible for you financially (over and above any scholarship).
    - You would have to wait 1 full academic year before you would be eligible for *off-campus* work authorization (e.g., internships, off-campus employment, CPT/OPT).
  - If your visa or passport expires while you are on away from campus, you would also have to renew at home before re-entering the US.
  - After you have your new I-20 and a valid US F-1 visa, you would be able to return legally to the US as an F-1 student as long as you enroll in at least one “in-person” course.
  - Since the return from leave process can take time (especially if you need a new visa) *it is recommended that you contact Dean Tina and your Class Dean at least 6-8 weeks prior to returning to campus.* This may be challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic so we will be as flexible as possible.

## ATHLETICS FAQs

- 21. I am a varsity athlete. Is there any way my visa or entrance into the U.S. can be expedited? Can I be designated as an “essential” person?**
- No, the US government does not have a special category for college athletes.
  - As an F-1 visa student you already have one of the best visas available to enter the U.S.
- 22. Am I eligible to take a gap year or leave of absence?**
- Please see the FAQs above on “gap years”. These rules apply equally to all Holy Cross students. Note that only Athletics can answer questions about how athletic scholarships would be affected (if at all) by your taking a leave of absence or “gap year.”

## MOVE-IN & RESIDENCE LIFE FAQs – updated 7/1/2021

**\*\* Please regularly check the College’s official COVID re-opening website and the College’s official “incoming students” page for up-to-date information. \*\***

- 23. When will I be allowed to move onto campus for fall 2021?**
- Please read about who is required to quarantine upon arrival to campus, above.**
  - Class of 2025 and new transfer students from US colleges**
    - If you register for [Gateways International Student Orientation](#) (ISO) and do not have to quarantine, you should plan to arrive at Boston Logan airport on Saturday, August 21 in order to begin the program on Sunday, August 22. You will be asked to provide your flight arrival information so that ISO leaders can pick you up at Logan.
    - If you are not attending Gateways ISO, the last date for you to arrive is Saturday, August 28, the start of Fall Gateway for the entire Class of 2025 and transfer students.
  - Class of 2024** – Watch your Holy Cross email for information about your move-in date. It will not be later than Sunday, August 29.
  - Classes of 2022 and 2023 returning students** should not plan to arrive earlier than Sunday, August 29<sup>th</sup>. To request an earlier date you must contact [Mr. Ryan Grant](#). Note that very early arrivals may be charged room/board and may not be able to move directly into their permanent rooms.