



EducationUSA Global Guide 2022 Academic Mobility and COVID-19

The COVID Supplement to the EducationUSA Global Guide was published on August 2, 2022 and will not be updated further. For questions regarding public health impacts on education in specific world regions, please contact EducationUSA REACs or educationusa@jie.org.

More than two years after the start of the outbreak, as in-person instruction and activities resume in many locations, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact academic mobility in higher education sectors around the world. EducationUSA is monitoring the challenges these circumstances pose to international students and continues to promote the United States as the top study destination, while also supporting the development and implementation of new, flexible strategies for international student recruitment, enrollment, and retention at U.S. institutions. As a supplement to the 2022 EducationUSA Global Guide, the enclosed information offers guidance to U.S. higher education institutions (HEIs) formulating recruitment plans and developing strategies to engage prospective international students. At the time of the publication, the EducationUSA network continues to be fully operational through a combination of virtual, hybrid, and in-person services and programming depending on local health and safety conditions worldwide. U.S. institutions are encouraged to consult with EducationUSA for the most current information about opportunities to engage the network.

Resources for U.S. Institutions

- [EducationUSA - Department of State](#)
- [Department of Homeland Security Guidance for 2022-2023 Academic Year](#)
- [EducationUSA Information on Department of Homeland Security Guidance](#)
- [Information about Consular Services Worldwide](#)
- [Requirements for Air Travelers to the United States](#)

Key recommendations

- Provide up-to-date information on your institution's website regarding policy changes that may lower barriers for applicants, to include flexible admission criteria, test-optional policies, options to begin studies online or overseas and transfer to in-person U.S. programs at a later date, deferring admissions, and/or adjusting program start dates.
- Proactively address COVID-19 testing, quarantine, or vaccination requirements impacting international students. HEIs should bear in mind that international students may have received vaccinations that have not been authorized or approved for use in the United States. HEIs are advised to communicate their institutional requirements clearly and as early as possible, including options for getting vaccinated in the United States.

- Encourage students to check the website for the Embassy or Consulate where they will apply for a U.S. visa or travel.state.gov for the most up-to-date information on student visa processing.
- Remind students they may be eligible to have their U.S. visa application adjudicated without an in-person interview. More details can be found [here](#).
- Highlight how you will ensure instructional quality and international student support services through temporary and/or long-term online offerings, and communicate plans to transition online instruction back to on-campus instruction when safe to do so.
- Highlight any programs or initiatives your institution has offered to support international students over the past year.
- Participate in virtual recruitment fairs and informational webinars, including EducationUSA [events](#) around the world. Ensure institutional representation at convenient times in local time zones. Consider looking beyond conventional virtual information session models by offering interactive workshops, virtual campus tours, and other innovative alternatives, including partnering with other HEIs for group events.
- Showcase profiles of currently enrolled international students and recent graduates from regions in which you are interested in recruiting. In particular, highlight examples of how your institution has supported international students during the pandemic to ensure their safety and the continuity of their academic trajectories.
- Provide clear information on policies your institution has in place to reduce the possibility of COVID-19 transmission, the support services provided for students who must quarantine, and contingency plans that will support students if campuses transition from in-person to virtual classes unexpectedly.
- Stay connected with EducationUSA including through its U.S. Higher Education Monthly Update. Accredited U.S. institutions and other eligible higher education stakeholders can subscribe [here](#).

Sub-Saharan Africa

Countries throughout Sub-Saharan Africa are struggling to recover from the economic and employment losses brought on by COVID-19. Currency devaluations and/or inflation have decreased purchasing power in most countries in the short term. At the same time, the International Monetary Fund predicts growth in the long-term for the region as a whole, which suggests economic resilience that may allow more students from Sub-Saharan Africa to pursue study overseas, including in the United States, in future years.

COVID-19 remains widespread in the region, although nearly all schools have reopened and standardized testing, including the West Africa Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), has resumed. HEIs are encouraged, to the extent possible, to accommodate students who may be delayed in arriving in the United States due to COVID-19. International Politics and Society reported in July 2022, “One of the most under-reported effects of the COVID-19 pandemic is its adverse effect on girls’ education, especially in Africa. An entire generation of African girls has been lost after lockdown-induced disruptions in their education, as many girls did not return to school after they reopened last year.” EducationUSA’s programming in the region will include activities and events that highlight opportunities for girls to study in the United States.

EducationUSA advisers in Sub-Saharan Africa organize in-person, virtual, and hybrid programs and events. Most students use their mobile phones to access presentations and information, and advisers focus on lower bandwidth options such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram,

to reduce barriers to participation. Short videos featuring students from the region reliably generate interest. Presentations in French and Portuguese can also help to attract more students and engage parents, who are often important decision makers. HEIs are encouraged to consult with EducationUSA advisers in the region to determine the types of engagement and times of day most likely to attract significant student participation.

East Asia and Pacific

While the COVID-19 situation in East Asia and Pacific (EAP) has improved over the last year, with a resumption to various degrees of business and tourism, the threat of variants and surges means continued uncertainty across the region. U.S. HEIs are encouraged to develop targeted messaging for students, focusing on flexibility and addressing country-specific questions, when possible.

EducationUSA centers in some EAP countries have been able to resume in-person engagements and domestic travel. However, several countries in the region continue to rely primarily on virtual outreach. While some countries are planning hybrid events and in-person activities as the local situation allows, online programming will continue throughout 2022. U.S. HEIs are encouraged to connect with advising centers to explore feasible recruitment options, including opportunities to reach underserved audiences outside major cities and in the Pacific Islands.

HEIs should seek the most updated guidance on international travel to and from the EAP region. COVID-19 testing and quarantine requirements change frequently, and though it is now possible to visit some EAP countries, HEIs should be mindful of additional travel costs, quarantine, testing requirements, travel documents, and other requirements. Travel conditions in the region will likely remain highly fluid for the foreseeable future, and changes to regulations may occur on short notice. HEIs should thoroughly research local vaccination policies, including the use of vaccination passports or other country-specific methods of verifying vaccination status. These policies are constantly evolving, and the inability to verify one's vaccination status may limit access to services and businesses.

Europe and Eurasia

Almost all countries in Europe and Eurasia have removed COVID-related restrictions for travel and in-person activities, though not all educational institutions have resumed in-person studies in the spring 2022 semester. Most countries do expect to resume in-person instruction from fall 2022. The long-term economic impact of COVID-19 on European and Eurasian economies continues to be unclear. While vaccination rollout procedures are ongoing across the region, in some countries distribution remains slow and uneven, and skepticism about vaccine safety and efficacy remains high.

Economic uncertainty and safety concerns related to the pandemic likely influenced some students' decisions to take gap years and/or defer U.S. study in the 2021-2022 academic year. European and Eurasian students remain interested and motivated to study in the United States. Record numbers participated in EducationUSA virtual programming events throughout 2021. U.S. HEIs seeking to continue or expand recruitment in Europe and Eurasia are encouraged to

contact EducationUSA advising centers across the region and monitor global and regional newsletters for engagement opportunities.

The European Commission's "[Re-open EU](#)" site may be a useful resource for U.S. HEIs. This site consolidates information on COVID-related restrictions on travel and in-person gatherings in the European Union, as well as testing and quarantine requirements for travelers and contact tracing apps. In addition, the European Commission provides information about the [centralized vaccination strategy](#) being implemented across the European Union, including which vaccines are approved by the European Medicines Agency.

Middle East and North Africa

The status of school operations, travel restrictions, and visa operations across the region remains variable depending on local health and safety conditions. Several countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have continued to rely on distance learning for secondary students due to recent spikes in COVID-19 cases, although quality and accessibility of remote learning opportunities vary by country. All Gulf countries have resumed classes in person and have high vaccination rates. Ongoing challenges include training teachers for new modes of instruction, access to reliable and affordable internet access, and availability of necessary equipment for online study. High school completion testing has been disrupted in the region, and institutions should be aware that some students' transcripts may be delayed or incomplete. Educational tour companies and higher education institutions have resumed in-person visits in Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. This [document](#) outlines visits planned in 2022.

The economic impact of the pandemic has most affected countries already experiencing financial challenges. For example, Lebanon imposed limitations on the amount of money that can be transferred outside the country, directly affecting families' ability to pay tuition abroad. Institutional scholarships are of particular interest to students in countries experiencing increased economic challenges. HEIs are encouraged to continue engaging with their points of contact for sponsored students, consider flexible application and admissions policies where possible, and publicly reaffirm their institutions' commitment to enrolling and supporting international students. While virtual events will continue, there are increasing opportunities to engage in person with prospective students in Gulf states, including Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

EducationUSA in the MENA region is well-positioned for virtual engagement, with full-time virtual advisers for Iran, Libya, Syria, and Yemen working to expand offerings and disseminate best practices in this area. Participation in virtual advising sessions, virtual meetings with U.S. HEIs, and online Competitive College Clubs remains high and attests to sustained interest from students in studying in the United States. In December 2020, EducationUSA held its first virtual fair in the region featuring 146 U.S. HEIs and reaching more than 1,600 students from across the region. EducationUSA plans to host additional online fairs going forward.

South and Central Asia

The status of school operations, travel restrictions, and visa operations across the South and Central Asian region varies, but the majority have resumed regular operations, with some ports of entry still requiring pre-screening requirements related to COVID-19.

Interest in U.S. higher education among prospective students from the region remains high. Some students continue to defer enrollments to the United States and consider studying in other English-speaking countries due to concerns about visa availability stemming from necessary COVID-19-related closures and limited appointments at consular sections. Standardized testing services are not reliably available in all locations, and students are eager to learn more about test-optional policies and flexible admissions criteria. U.S. HEIs should proactively communicate updates on institutional policies that impact admissions and in-person learning.

EducationUSA has organized several virtual college fairs and engagement opportunities this year, attracting students from across South and Central Asia. More large-scale in-person events for HEIs will resume in spring 2023, but some smaller group recruitment and outreach opportunities have already begun taking place. U.S. HEIs are encouraged to communicate measures to ensure student well-being and safety and highlight critical institutional responses supporting current and newly enrolled students. In addition to standard social media channels, U.S. HEIs should explore popular platforms in the region, including Telegram, WeChat, YouTube, and WhatsApp.

Many schools and universities are open, and in-person instruction has resumed. EducationUSA centers have resumed in-person services where local conditions permit. U.S. HEIs are encouraged to contact Regional Education Advising Coordinators (REACs) or EducationUSA centers for more information about traveling to a country or to collaborate in offering joint virtual programming.

Western Hemisphere

The economic impact of the pandemic will continue to affect students throughout the region and may limit the ability of some middle-class families to afford study abroad. Marginalized and economically disenfranchised students are disproportionately affected, making scholarships essential to achieve inclusive education goals. In some countries, the currency devaluation has curtailed currently enrolled students' ability to continue their studies in the United States without additional support. While students from economically stable families are still considering higher education in the United States, they also continue to explore alternate destinations, weighing factors such as concerns about safety and security, cost, and prospects for work/study and professional training.

Most schools and universities have reopened, and in-person instruction is increasing, though this varies by country. With more schools open, it should be easier for students to acquire transcripts and other documentation needed for college applications. However, disruptions to the education sector in some countries have resulted in grading system changes (such as students receiving pass/fail grades instead of letter grades), which could make evaluating credentials more challenging. In these cases, U.S. higher education representatives are welcome to contact EducationUSA in the respective country. Access to in-person visits and outreach events varies by location, so please contact EducationUSA before planning an in-person visit.

Most countries in the Western Hemisphere currently report full vaccination rates of above 50% of the population, with the exception of a few countries in Central America and the Caribbean. EducationUSA centers in most countries are gradually resuming in-person services as local conditions permit. U.S. HEIs are encouraged to contact REACs or EducationUSA centers to find out more information about traveling to a country or to collaborate in offering joint virtual or

hybrid programming. Due to increased demand from U.S. institutions for engagement through webinars and virtual presentations with the region, EducationUSA recommends that groups of HEIs jointly contact EducationUSA to explore opportunities for virtual presentations, seminars, workshops, and mini-fairs in groups.