

Date: May 7, 2020

Subject: One-year teacher extensions beyond the maximum duration

Dear Teacher Sponsors:

The Department appreciates your continued efforts in addressing the health, safety, and welfare concerns of your exchange visitors during this challenging time.- In order to help sponsors manage the unprecedented challenges presented by the COVID-19 crisis, this email contains an important update regarding a one-time,-one-year extension beyond the five-year maximum duration for exchange teachers now completing their fifth year.

Due to the extreme challenges that COVID-19 has presented for travel and other aspects of our exchanges, the Department offers to make available to exchange teachers currently in the fifth year of their exchange program the option to -extend for a sixth and final year for the 2020-2021 academic year. This initiative recognizes the limited availability of visa services at U.S. consulates and embassies overseas, among other COVID-19 related limitations. Moreover, it enables teacher sponsors to continue supporting current host schools' cultural and educational exchange programs.

To pursue this option teacher sponsors must reassess the eligibility of both those exchange teachers and their host schools. To be eligible for the extension, exchange teachers must be compliant with all Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) regulations and sponsor policies. If exchange teachers were unable to complete both required [cross-cultural] activities due to, e.g., school closures, state lock-down requirements, or social distancing restrictions, they should nevertheless submit the report required by 22 CFR 62.24(h)(2). In these instances, exchange teachers should fully report any completed activities and explain the circumstances that prevented their full compliance with this requirement.

Once teacher sponsors have identified eligible fifth-year exchange teachers, they can reach out to such exchange teachers and their host schools to determine their interest and availability in extending for an additional academic year. After confirming that schools and exchange teachers together wish to seek an extension, sponsors must secure offer letters from host schools stating that there no -American teacher available to fill the positions in question, and agreeing to hire the exchange teachers for an additional year through a contract compliant with the regulations.

At this point, teacher sponsors should submit a request for this one-time, one-year extension in SEVIS for each interested and eligible exchange teacher. The program end date in these requests cannot be later than June 30, 2021. Sponsors should

continue to monitor SEVIS records and apply for this one-year extension prior to the exchange teacher's program end date if possible. Finally, teacher sponsors must submit an extension justification for each teacher to TeacherExtensions@state.gov by June 30, 2020. The extension must include a copy of the host school offer letter and a completed "One-year teacher extension request" Excel spreadsheet that provides the following information for each teacher: (1) SEVIS identification number, (2) full name (last name, first name), (3) date of birth, (4) country of citizenship, (5) sponsor program number, (6) the requested program end date (no later than June 30, 2021), (7) Pay.gov receipt for the \$367 extension fee, and (8) reassessment of the exchange teacher eligibility and host school agreement to a one-year extension beyond the five-year maximum duration.

Once the Office of Designation has granted an extension request for one or more eligible exchange teachers, the sponsor should reprint Forms DS-2019 for those exchange teachers whose programs are extended and provide them with these updated and signed forms as soon as possible.

The Department is continuing to closely monitor the COVID-19 situation and its effect on the EVP. We will supplement this guidance with additional information and/or will adjust our guidance, as needed.

Once again, thank you for your work, patience, and understanding as we navigate through these unprecedented times together.

Sincerely,

Office of Private Sector Exchange