
**Overcoming Challenges with International Student Admissions
into ACEND-accredited Programs: A Recipe for Success**

October 24, 2023 | 11:00 a.m. Central Time

Presenters:

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**Accreditation Council
for Education in
Nutrition and Dietetics**

the accrediting agency for the
 Academy of Nutrition
and Dietetics

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<https://vimeo.com/878448067>

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
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Overcoming Challenges with International Student Admissions into ACEND®-accredited Programs: A Recipe for Success

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Overcoming Challenges with International Student Admissions into ACEND®-accredited Programs: A Recipe for Success

Dr. Kiran C. Patel College
of Osteopathic Medicine
NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY




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Session objectives

1. Describe the admission process for international applicants
2. Illustrate government and university requirements for international students
3. Discuss challenges program directors face with international applicants
4. Identify possible strategies to help ACEND® programs become more inclusive to international students


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Speakers




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Speaker Disclosures

- Nadine Mikati, Ph.D., RDN and Deborah Pabon Crespo, M.S. DSO, ARO are both employed by Nova Southeastern University.
- Karolina Snita, M.S. is employed by Viamar Health.

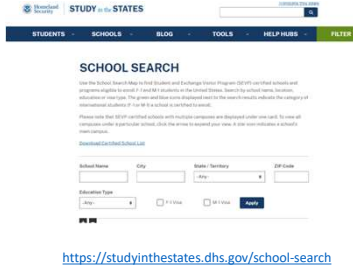
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Session outline- Admissions

- Introductions and overview of Nova Southeastern University's ACEND® accredited programs
- Overall admissions criteria
- Additional admissions criteria needed for international students
- Assessment of prior learning process
- Practicum component and how international status affects this requirement
- Department of Education program code: STEM program
- Awareness and resources to support students

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- To accept international students, institutions must be listed on the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)-certified schools and programs website.
- Registration determines if universities are eligible to enroll F-1 students in the United States.



<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/school-search>

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Department overview

- 10 full time faculty, 2 staff and 12 adjuncts
- Student ambassadors support recruitment initiatives

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Overview of Nova Southeastern University's (NSU) ACEND®-accredited nutrition programs

Undergraduate (DPD)	Graduate (MS-RDN)
Candidacy accreditation by ACEND in 2020 Awaiting full decision by January 2024	Candidacy accreditation by ACEND in 2018. Full accreditation granted until December, 2029; Branch campus approved in 2023 30 seats
Total program graduates: 23	Total international graduates: 33
5 international students	4 international students (11 total with general M.S. program)
In-person program 120 credits	Hybrid (mostly in-person)
Dual admission option into a graduate health profession Admits fall and winter terms	71 credits; 2 years Admits only in summer term Practicums included

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Additional admissions criteria for international students

- Proof of English language proficiency is required unless applicants are citizens of a country where English is the official language, or they are a student at a school that is taught primarily in English (such as Canadian schools).

Undergraduate (DPD)	Graduate (MS-RDN)
TOEFL: 213 on the computer-based test or 79 on the Internet-based test IELTS: 6.0 or higher on the test module Cambridge English B2 First, C1 Advanced or C2 Proficiency Duolingo Test of English: 105 or higher Pearson Test of English Academic: Overall score of 54 or higher ITEP Academic: Overall score of 3.9 or higher Passing Level 4 or higher from TALK English Schools	TOEFL: 213 on the computer-based test or 79 on the Internet-based test IELTS: 6.0 or higher on the test module Pearson Test of English Academic: Overall score of 54 or higher GMAT: score of 450 GRE: score of 1000 (old format) or score of 306 (new format) ACT: at least 20 on the verbal section Duolingo English Proficiency: at least 100
SAT verbal scores of 520 or higher or ACT English score of 20 Completion and passing of ELS Level 112 Intensive Program English for Academic Purposes	English language competency can also be in the form of successful completion of a bachelor's degree or higher at an approved regionally accredited U.S. institution of higher education.

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Transfer credits for undergraduate program

- NSU will transfer courses from previous regionally accredited colleges and universities for which a student has earned a grade of C or higher.
- A student may transfer a maximum of 90 degree-applicable credits and **at least 50 percent of credits in the student's major must be earned at NSU in regular academic offerings.**

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Additional admissions criteria for international students

- If any university coursework was completed outside the United States, the transcript should be evaluated by a NACES-accredited organization.
- A list of these organizations can be found at <https://www.naces.org/>

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NACES-accredited organizations

<https://www.naces.org/members>

Current Members

A2Z Evaluations, LLC Member since May 2009	Institute of Foreign Credential Services, Inc. Member since May 2008
Academic Evaluation Services, Inc. Member since May 2008	International Academic Credential Evaluators, Inc. Member since May 2008
Center for Applied Research, Evaluation & Education, LLC Member since March 1987	International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. Member since March 1987
Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. Member since March 1987	International Education Evaluators, Inc. Member since May 2008
Educational Transpacific, LLC Member since April 2003	International Education Research Foundation, Inc. Member since March 1987
International Degree Evaluation Service, Inc. Member since April 1993	Josef Silvy and Associates, Inc. International Education Consultants Member since April 1989
Foreign Academic Credential Service, Inc. Member since March 1987	SouthStar: The Evaluation Company Member since April 1998
Foundation for International Services, Inc. Member since March 1987	Transcript Research Member since September 2020
Global Credential Evaluators, Inc. Member since March 2008	World Education Services, Inc. Member since March 1987
Global Language Services Member since May 2009	

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MS-RDN program admissions

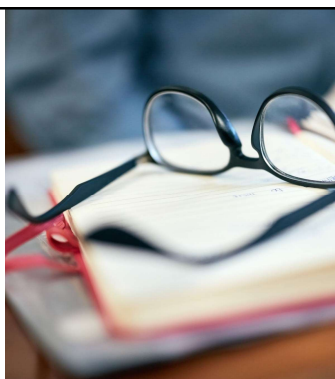
*Additional admissions criteria for international students

- 8 prerequisite courses with grade of C (70%) or higher
- Interview required for shortlisted candidates via Zoom
- If applicant has a foreign degree and prerequisites, transcript evaluation must be sent directly from an NACES-accredited organization*
 - ✓ Course-by-course listing, credit hours, grades, cumulative grade point average, and all degrees earned
- DPD verification statement is preferred but not required
- Students may be from ACEND®-accredited international programs

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Assessment of prior learning or coursework for graduate program policy

- Applicants submit transcripts or a portfolio to demonstrate competency prior to admission
- Admissions Committee will evaluate
- A maximum of 6 transfer credits allowed - *non experiential learning*



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Tips for evaluating international student applications

- Is the applicant a graduate from a foreign ACEND®- accredited program?
- Look at number of credits and courses in the foreign transcript evaluation.
- Do not only rely on course names. Ask for syllabi for courses that might be a match and evaluate accordingly. *For example, if a student has 2 biology classes, labelled as BIO 201 and BIO202: One might be a general bio class and one might be a microbiology class.*
- Meet with the student via phone/Zoom. A conversation unlocks a lot of hurdles that cannot be detected via email.

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Tips for evaluating international student applications

- Offer application fee waivers for those that reach out to us or attend pre-admission advising sessions.
- Application takes longer to process (including visa) and thus it is vital to plan ahead to ensure on time arrival of the student.
 - If a student cannot make it on time, defer application for next cycle
 - Offer a courtesy review of the transcript, to determine any missing courses prior to the candidate submitting an official application
 - Meet with prospective applicants regularly

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Tips for evaluating international student applications

During the candidate interview, it is especially important to note the resources and opportunities that the international student may or may not have in their home country and evaluate accordingly.

- For instance, a candidate who traveled 2 hours each way to shadow dietitian in home country may have less observational experience than other U.S.-based candidates.
- Grades in other countries might be assigned differently (*A candidate with a 3.5 GPA might be in the top 5% in their class*)
- Different countries have different requirements to become a dietitian, and thus some international students might already be working dietitians in their home countries.
- Discuss relocation, time frame and program costs.
- Candidates might not be familiar with the U.S. healthcare system.
- Be aware of cultural habits and attire. Create a welcoming and neutral environment.
- Offer open advising sessions – but consider time differences. This requires creative planning.

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Strategies to boost international admissions

- Offer admission to a general master's program if candidate ratings did not make it, with an option of applying again for the next cohort. No guarantees for admission into RDN cohort.
- Internal admission process with reserved number of seats for internal candidates, notified with an earlier decision
- Consider scholarships
- Word of mouth referrals
- Faculty outreach
- Faculty microaggressions training

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International students on scholarship from their home country

Certain countries have requirements that students must meet to satisfy the scholarship requirement

Ask applicants to present any requirements during the admissions process

Work as part of the advising process and develop an academic plan to meet that criteria

Example: The Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM) will only approve 6 credits of online study in a student's program

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Tuition & financial aid

- Private university with tuition costing the same for in-state/out-of-state/international students
- International students are not eligible for financial aid but can apply to graduate assistantships or scholarships
- Letter of financial support needed for visa process
- NSU does offer an option of a payment plan versus lump sum
- Alumni discount



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Immigration regulations

- All international students must either obtain an F-1 visa (student visa) to study in the U.S. or have a visa status that permits a nonresident alien to study in the United States.
- International students need to obtain an I-20 in order to apply for an F-1 at the American Embassy in their home country.
- The Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) at Nova Southeastern University oversees issuing the I-20 when the following criteria are met:
 - ✓ Students must be officially accepted for admission to Nova Southeastern University, having met both academic and English requirements
 - ✓ Students must indicate their acceptance for admission by submitting an enrollment deposit
 - ✓ Must demonstrate availability of funds

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International students

- The Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) provides complete support and advisory services.
- OISS offers immigration assistance for the NSU community and serves as a liaison between our office and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in matters related to international students.
- OISS also provides support services and events such as international student orientation, international education week, networking events, and more.



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Resources to support international students



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NSUFlorida

Office of International Affairs (OIA)



Deborah Pabon, M.S., DSO, ARO
Senior International Student & Scholar Advisor

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Session outline- Office of International Affairs

- Describe the visa process from the university side
- Define extra requirements needed for international students
- Explain how to maintain status while in the U.S.
- Discuss employment options for international students
- Discuss Optional Practical Training (OPT) and Curricular Practical Training (CPT)

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The Office of International Affairs (OIA) provides general **guidance**. Any advice provided by OIA, including the information in this presentation, should **not be construed as legal advice**.

Due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, DHS, USCIS, SEVP and other governmental agencies may change their interpretations of these immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits, at any time. OIA is committed to providing **advice based on the most current guidance**.

Each case is fact specific, and it is advised that students contact an experienced **immigration attorney** with questions regarding individual situations.



Disclaimer

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STEP #1 Admissions

Admissions process is directly with the College

OIA - Foreign will study report – Biweekly

Contact prospective students providing the requirements for I-20

International Students – F1 Visa – No Online Degrees

- Admissions process completed
- Student fully accepted
- I-20 requirements submitted to OIA
- Request for I-20 to be issued

<https://www.nova.edu/internationalaffairs/students/prospective/Checklist%20For%20Admitted%20Students%20.html>

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I-20 Requirements

Pre-arrival

- IPF (I-20 Process Form)
- Copy of biographical page of passport
- Foreign address & phone number (IPF)
- Transfer authorization Form (if applicable)
- Letter of financial support

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STEP #2 Processing I-20

Pre-arrival

- What is the I-20? I-20 used for F-1 visa application
- Document submission deadlines for each Semester (fall, winter, summer)
- OIA Processing Times
 - Processing time for Initial I-20 issuance is **7-10 business days** upon receipt of required documentation
 - Incomplete documents, corrupt files, and incorrect information will result in processing delays
 - All I-20's are issued electronically and sent by email. Print and sign

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Applying for an F-1 visa

- Visa processes different based on the country
- Student responsible for Visa application process
- Applying for the F1 student visa:
 - Appointment is required (I-20 needed to schedule the appointment)
 - SEVIS fee payment (confirmation)
- Documents required for appointment:
 - I-20 issued by NSU
 - Valid passport
 - Original financial document(s)
 - SEVIS I-901 payment receipt
- Exception – Students from Canada & Bermuda Do NOT need Visa Stamped in passport

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Transferring the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record

Student pursuing studies in the US under a valid F-1 status

Request SEVIS record to be transferred from institution A to institution B (before departing the US and the expiration of the 60-day grace period)

I-20 Requirements

- **IPF (I-20 Process Form)**
- Copy of Biographical Page of Passport
- Foreign Address & Phone number (IPF)
- **Transfer Authorization Form** (if applicable)
- Letter of Financial Support

OIA advice is recommended

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Welcoming our international students – NSU events OIA orientation & check-in sessions

Arriving to the U.S.

General information

- **HOW TO MAINTAIN F-1 STATUS**
- Driver License
- Student employment
- How to obtain a Social Security Number

Check-In with OIA
Required to Activate SEVIS Record/ I-20

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Maintaining status while in the U.S.

- **Enrolled in a full course of study**
 - Undergrad – 12 credits minimum (9, face to face)
 - Masters – 6 credits minimum (3, face to face)
 - Professional – 3 credits minimum (face to face)
- **Summer enrollment** – not required, unless by the program **AND** if it is the **first term**.
- **Reduced Course Load (RCL)** – used when the student enrolls for less than full course of study – specific reasons to be approved (i.e., medical condition)
- **Leave of Absence** – OIA should be notified and SEVIS record/I-20 will be terminated

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What does this mean for your program?

- Per immigration guidelines, an international student holding an F1 visa cannot pursue a fully online degree while in the U.S → program must include a face-to-face or hybrid modality.
- An undergraduate student should be enrolled in a full course of study every term, that is at least 12 credits: 9 credits should be face-to-face, and the remainder could be online.
- In a graduate program, the international student should be enrolled for at least 6 credits and 3 credits are required face to face. The remainder could be online.

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Program tip:

Programs may choose to offer a separate course section for international students, or program may code a course as hybrid, detailing on campus meeting dates for international students while other students are fully online.

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Employment for international students

On Campus Employment

- Up to 20 hours-school session/up to 40 during breaks

Off Campus Employment

- Economic Hardship – Appointment with designated school official (DSO) required
- SSR (Special Student Relieve)- suspends restrictions related to on- and off-campus employment, alters full course of study requirements for eligible F-1 students. Appointment with DSO required

***Advising with a DSO/International Student Advisor is required**

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Curricular practical training (CPT) & practicums

- Authorization is needed to go outside the university for practicum experience/rotations whether paid or unpaid.
- Training must be part of the program and attached to a student's curriculum
- Requires course credit
- Requires approval from the university's Office of International Affairs.
- A rotation assignment letter is needed, signed by the program director.
- Full time CPT for 364+ days cancels OPT

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Optional practical training (OPT) for F-1 students

- F-1 students typically are allowed a 12-month post-graduation OPT/work authorization.
- All OPT must be directly related to a major area of study.
- For a student to be eligible to apply for OPT, the student should have been a full-time student status for at least one academic year by the requested start date of the OPT.
 - Student should not have used OPT at the same degree level previously

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OPT extension

- Students in certain science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields, may apply for a 24-month extension of OPT employment.
- For a student to be eligible, program must be coded on the STEM-designated degree program list under the department of education.
- Nutritional Sciences is listed on the list. It is NOT automatic. Program director must request that coding from university personnel.

<https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/stemlist2022.pdf>
<https://www.uscis.gov/working-united-states/students-and-exchange-visitors/students-and-employment/stem-opt>

CIP Code Series	2020 CIP Code	CIP Code Title
29	29.0007	Arms and Ammunition Technology
29	29.0399	Military Applied Sciences, Other
29	29.0403	Aerospace Ground Equipment Technology
29	29.0402	Air and Space Operations Technology
29	29.0403	Aircraft Armament Systems Technology
29	29.0404	Explosive Ordnance Bomb Disposal
29	29.0405	Joint Command/Task Force (JCTF) Systems
29	29.0406	Military Information Systems Technology
29	29.0407	Health and Space Systems Technology
29	29.0408	Munitions Systems/Ordnance Technology
29	29.0409	Radio Communications and Systems Technology
29	29.0499	Military Systems and Maintenance Technology, Other
29	29.9999	Military Technologies and Applied Sciences, Other
30	30.0001	Biological and Physical Sciences
30	30.0601	Systems Science and Theory
30	30.0602	Mathematics and Computer Science
30	30.1001	Biopsychology
30	30.1701	Behavioral Sciences
30	30.1801	Natural Sciences
30	30.1901	Nutritional Sciences
30	30.2501	Cognitive Science, General
30	30.2701	Human Biology
30	30.3001	Computational Science
30	30.3101	Human Computer Interaction
30	30.3201	Marine Sciences
30	30.3301	Sustainability Studies
30	30.3401	Anthropology
30	30.3501	Climate Science
30	30.3601	Earth System Science
30	30.3901	Economics and Computer Science
30	30.4101	Environmental Administration

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Processing times at OIA

- 7-10 business days
- International students admitted 2 weeks before classes start will probably not have ample time to process the paperwork/visa process to arrive on time.
- Plan admissions accordingly

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Personal Experience

Karolina Snita, MS

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Session outline- International Student/Alumnus Perspective

- Describe the student's journey
- Discuss the required paperwork as an international student and experience from a student perspective
- Illustrate the cultural adaptation to the U.S.
- Discuss recommendations for others based on personal experience

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About Me

- From Poland
- Previous professional tennis player presented on the Women's Tennis Association (WTA) list
- Received an athletic scholarship
- B.S. in General Studies with Biology and Exercise Science concentrations from NSU
- M.S. in Nutrition from NSU

Karolina Snita 

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Required paperwork: How it went for me

- Not everyone's experience is the same
- Valid F-1 Visa
- Valid Passport
- Endorsed and original form I-20
- Proof of financial support (bank statements, salary slips)
- Transcripts
- Admission

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Cultural adaptation

- Food
- Weather
- Transportation
- Currency
- Social Mannerisms

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Language barrier

- Cultural misunderstanding
- Different terminology

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Family/Friends

- Average cost of a flight ticket from Miami (United States) to Warsaw (Poland) is \$1,000
- During summer and Christmas time the flight ticket prizes are even greater
- Lack of time (summer is one of the semesters)

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Program experience

- Practicums open doors for international students
- Connections built with preceptors
- Job opportunities

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Recommendations


- Link individuals from similar home countries together, to help with the move process.
- If a student can, a school tour pre-admission is a plus.
- Encourage students to join student organizations such as sports teams, dance clubs, fraternities, sororities, book clubs, nutrition clubs, or anything the student is interested in.

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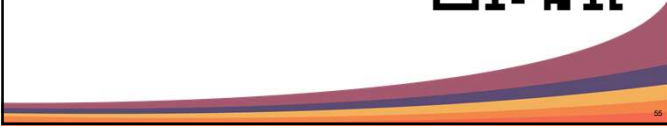
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