



A.1 Applying for an F-1 Student Visa

Excerpts from http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html

If you are going to study in the United States, please read this information for general information on how to apply for an F1 student visa. In most countries, first-time student visa applicants are required to appear for an in-person interview. However, each embassy and consulate sets its interview policies and procedures regarding student visas. Students should consult Embassy websites or call for specific application instructions.

Keep in mind that June, July, and August are the busiest months in most consular sections, and interview appointments are the most difficult to get during that period. Students need to plan ahead to avoid having to make repeat visits to the Embassy. Students should bring the documents suggested below, as well as any other documents that might help establish their ties to the local community. It is important to apply for your visa well in advance of your travel departure date.

When Do I Need to Apply for My Student Visa?

Students are encouraged to apply for their visas early to provide ample time for visa processing. Students may apply for their visas as soon as they are prepared to do so.

The consular officer may need to get special clearances depending on the course of study and nationality of the student. This can take some additional time.

Students should note that Embassies and Consulates can issue a student visa 120 days or fewer, in advance of the course of study registration date.

If you apply for your visa more than 120 days before your start date as listed on the Form I-20, the Embassy or Consulate will hold your application until it can issue the visa. Consular officials will use that extra time to accomplish any of the necessary special clearances or other processes that may be required.

New students may not enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the course of study start/report date as shown on the Form I-20.

Please consider this date carefully when making travel plans to the U.S.

What is SEVIS and SEVP? What should you know about it?

The Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State is responsible for monitoring schools, F-1 status students, and others through the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). Student information is maintained in the Student and

Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is an Internet-based system that maintains accurate and current information on non-immigrant students (F visa) and their dependents (F-2). SEVIS enables schools to transmit mandatory information and event notifications, via the Internet, to the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State (DOS) throughout a student's stay in the United States.

All student applicants must have a SEVIS-generated I-20, which they submit when they are applying for their student visa. The consular officer will need to verify your I-20 record electronically through the SEVIS system to process your student visa application. Unless otherwise exempt, participants must pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee to the Department of Homeland Security for each program. The fee may be paid either through a special website, via Western Union, or by mail. The payment website is www.fmjfee.com.

Applying for a Student Visa

As part of the visa application process, an interview at the embassy consular section is required for visa applicants from age 14 through 79. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. It is important to remember that applying early and providing the requested documents does not guarantee that the student will receive a visa. Because each student's personal and academic situation may differ, two students applying for the same visa classification may be asked different questions and be required to submit different documents. For that reason, the guidelines that follow are general and can be abridged or expanded by consular officers overseas, depending on each student's situation.

Required Documentation

An interview at the embassy consular section is required for almost all visa applicants. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. During the visa interview, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken, as well as a digital photo. Some applicants will need additional screening and will be notified when they apply.

A passport valid for travel to the United States and with validity at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the United States (unless country-specific agreements provide exemptions).

One (1) 2x2 photograph. See the required photo format explained in the nonimmigrant photograph requirements.

All applicants **should be prepared** to provide:

- Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions attended.
- Scores from standardized tests required by the educational institution such as the TOEFL.
- Financial evidence that you or your sponsors have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period of your intended study. For example, if you or your sponsor is a salaried employee, please bring income tax documents and original bank books and/or

statements.

Additional Information

No assurances regarding the issuance of visas can be given in advance. Therefore, final travel plans or the purchase of non-refundable tickets should not be made until a visa has been issued. Unless previously canceled, a visa is valid until its expiration date. Therefore, if the traveler has a valid U.S. visa in an expired passport, do not remove the visa page from the expired passport. You may use it along with a new valid passport for travel and admission to the United States.