

Preparing For Your F-1 Visa Interview

This information is for individuals who plan to enter the United States for the first time to study. For information on bringing dependents to the U.S., returning to continue studies, or renewing your visa, or for more details on how to apply for a student visa, refer to the U.S. Department of State website, at:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_types_students2.html

STEPS

1. Contact your local U.S. Consulate or Embassy to ask about how to get an F-1 international student visa. A list of Consulates and Embassies can be found at <http://usembassy.state.gov/>.
2. After you receive an I-20 form from the school that you want to attend, follow the U.S. Embassy/Consulate's instructions to schedule an interview for your F-1 student visa. It is important to apply for your student visa as far in advance as possible. Many consulates recommend that appointments be made no more than 90 days from the intended date of travel, but some can make earlier arrangements for interviews.
3. Complete the following forms:
 - (a) DS-156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form;
 - (b) DS-158 Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant; and,
 - (c) If you are a male between the ages of 16 and 45, you must complete DS-157 Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application.
4. Pay the visa application fee by following instructions on your local U.S. embassy or consulate's web site.
5. If your I-20 was issued on or after September 1, 2004, and is marked for "initial" attendance (see #3 on your I-20 form), you will also need to pay the \$100 SEVIS fee.

To Pay By Mail

- (a) Get a Form I-901 "Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, and M Nonimmigrants."
 - Download the form from <https://www.fmjfee.com/index.jhtml> or
 - Ask for the form by phone at 1-800-870-3676 (inside the US)
- (b) Complete the Form I-901. Be sure to write your name exactly how it appears on your I-20 form.
- (c) Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft (drawn on US banks only¹) in the amount of \$100 USD, made payable to "The Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement."
- (d) Mail the completed I-901 and payment to the address listed on Form I-901.
- (e) A Form I-797 receipt confirmation letter should be mailed within 3 days of processing the fee. Be sure to make copies of this receipt letter, and keep it with your other important immigration documents

To Pay Online

- (a) Find the Form I-901 at <https://www.fmjfee.com/index.jhtml>
- (b) Complete the form online and supply the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information. *Be sure to write your name exactly how it appears on your I-20 form.
- (c) Print a copy of the online receipt.
- (d) Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents

You must bring the receipt of fee payment with you to the interview. If you have lost the receipt, the Visa Officer should be able to view your payment history in his or her database.

If you are transferring schools, extending your program, applying for an F-2 dependent visa, or have paid this fee and been denied a visa within the last twelve months, you do not need to pay the \$100 SEVIS fee.

6. Prepare and bring to your visa interview the following:
 - (a) A passport valid for at least six months
 - (b) Form I-20 (sign the form under *Item 11*)
 - (c) School admission letter
 - (d) Completed visa applications (DS-156, DS-158, and, if applicable, DS-157)
 - (e) Two 2"x 2" photographs in the prescribed format (see the travel.state.gov website at http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_types_students2.html)
 - (f) A receipt for the visa application fee
 - (g) A receipt for the SEVIS fee. If you have not received an official receipt in the mail showing payment and you paid the fee electronically, the consulate will accept the temporary receipt you printed from your computer. If you do not have a receipt, the consulate may be able to see your payment electronically if your fee payment was processed at least 3 business days before your interview.
 - (h) Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period you intend to study.
 - (i) Any information that proves that you will return to your home country after finishing your studies in the U.S. This may include proof of property, family, or other ties to your community.

7. Remain calm and answer all the Visa Officer's questions to you openly and honestly.

If you have any questions, please contact Barbara Jackson at barbara.whittjackson@usm.edu or (601) 266-4841.

¹Many foreign banks are able to issue checks or money orders drawn on a U.S. bank. You may therefore obtain a check from: 1) a bank chartered or operated in the United States; b) a foreign subsidiary of a U.S. bank, or c) a foreign bank that has an arrangement with a U.S. bank to issue a check, money order, or foreign draft that is drawn on a U.S. bank