

Visa Applications

Students and Exchange Visitors must obtain an F-1 or J-1 visa at a U.S. consulate or embassy **outside** the United States. International students should apply for the visa in their **home country**, unless circumstances or travel plans make this impossible. If the student applies in a third country, the application may take more time and be reviewed more critically than if it was applied for at home.

Visa procedures may differ from one consulate or embassy to another. Before applying, check with the office where you plan to apply to determine exactly what additional supporting documentation is required. The U.S. Department of State maintains an authoritative website on the **visa application process** at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1304.html that we recommend you study carefully. A personal interview with the consular official is now usually required.

Required Documents for Obtaining a Visa

1. **Complete visa application forms** (http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_1342.html) and pay visa fees http://travel.state.gov/visa/fees/fees_1341.html
2. Receipt for payment of the **I-901 SEVIS fee if applicable** <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>
3. **Passport** valid for at least six months after your proposed date of entry into the U.S.
4. **2" x 2" photograph**
5. **Form I-20 or DS-2019** (with a valid travel endorsement for continuing students)
6. **Status Verification Letter** from OISS for continuing students (optional)
7. **Financial evidence** detailing source and amount of funding. Consular and immigration officers exercise considerable discretion in determining whether financial support exists and is sufficient to cover your entire period of stay. Prepare documentation that is thorough, consistent, credible and varied. Examples of financial documentation include: Graduate Assistantship offer letters, bank statements, letters from government sponsor, etc.
8. **Official academic transcripts**, confirmation of enrollment, and **proof of English language proficiency** may also be requested.
9. **Evidence of continuing ties to your home country** (i.e. family, property, job status, etc.)
Visa applicants are presumed to be "intended immigrants." Your visa will be denied unless you satisfy the consular officer that you will return home. Unfortunately, there is no single explanation, document, or letter that can guarantee visa issuance.
10. If you are an F-1 student on Optional Practical Training, you must also present your EAD card or receipt notice that your OPT application is pending, and employment verification if OPT has been approved.

Tips for Obtaining a Visa

- Apply for the visa in a timely manner. Consult the embassy or consulate where you will apply to see their wait times at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html.
- Continuing students should bring a copy of their transcripts to show they are making progress toward degree completion and are in good academic standing.
- If students are denied the visa, they should ask the visa officer the reason for their denial and then consult with an international advisor in OISS.

Security & Name Checks

Effective November 13, 2001, certain visa applicants became subject to an additional name check clearance procedure before being issued a nonimmigrant visa. The procedure requires consular officers to send the visa applicant's name to be checked against information in various security, law enforcement, and intelligence databases.

Visa applicants affected include (but may not be limited to) males between the ages of 16 and 45 from one of the following countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, and students in certain areas of study. Reports indicate that the procedure can take at least 20 business days. Please factor this extra time into your planned visa processing time if you believe you may belong to an affected group.