

Dear International student.

To help you go through the visa process, please take a moment to read the following. You may also check the official website of the U.S. Embassy in your country on how to prepare for F-1 visa application.

**Applicants needing a visa to enter the U.S. must pay the SEVIS fee before going to the U.S. embassy or consulate for their visa interview.**

Please go to [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com) to pay the SEVIS -901 fee. This site provide automated capabilities that support the payment of the fee for F-1, F-3, M-1, M-3, and J-1 Non-immigrants required and authorized by Public Law 104-208, Subtitle D, Section 641.

Currently there are two ways to pay the fee: credit card or bank draft/money order.

**If you want to pay by credit card:**

The only option for paying by credit or debit card is when you fill in the Form I-901 online at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com). When you have filled in the online form, you will be asked if you want to pay by credit or debit card or by check or money order. Choose the *credit card* option. Be sure to have the printer ready when you start the payment process and print out the receipt immediately after you complete the payment.

**If you want to pay by check or bank draft:**

Your check needs to be a draft drawn on a financial institution in the United States and payable in United States currency. Make it payable to *I-901 student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee*. Fill in your Form I-901 online at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com), choose the option to *pay by check or money order* and print a payment coupon.

For your information, use this checklist when paying by check or bank draft:

1. The payment is by international money order or a foreign draft drawn on a financial institution in the United States and payable in United States currency
2. Your name and SEVIS ID number (shown on I-20) are on the check or money order
3. The check or money order is made out to *I-901 student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee*
4. Attach your check or money order to your payment coupon
5. Mailing the Form and Payment

Ensure your payment envelope has your correct return address. Also, be sure to include both your payment and your payment coupon. Send to:

By mail

I-901 student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee  
P.O. Box 970020  
St. Louis, MO 63197-0020  
United States  
Phone Number: 1-314-418-8833

By Courier (to expedite delivery to SEVP)

I-901 student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee  
1005 Convention Plaza  
St. Louis, MO 63101  
United States

You may check the I-901 information online at <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/i901/faq4.htm>.

## Visa Filing and Interview Information

In order to apply for a student visa, the university must have accepted the application and sent the appropriate documents. For example, the F-1 student visa requires the I-20 form, and the J-1 student visa requires the DS-2019 form. Students should always double-check the documents that they receive and immediately notify the university if they find an error. Following is a list of items to which students should pay particular attention:

- Check the spelling of names. When applying to the university, always write the name in capital letters to avoid the misinterpretation.
- Check the date of birth. U.S. universities follow the MM/DD/YYYY format.
- Check the program of study and the start of term date. If the student is not able to report on the specified date, then he or she should contact the university and defer the application until the next semester.

### What to Bring When Applying for a visa:

**1. Passport:** The passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the visa application date. Any expired and/or other current passport(s) should also be presented. A record of previously issued nonimmigrant visas assists that consular officer in making a decision.

**2. I-20/DS-2019 Form:** The I-20 or DS-2019 Form (issued by the school in the U.S.) is mandatory for all student visa applications. Please sign the I-20 or DS-2019 Form.

**3. Evidence of Prior Education:** Applicants should bring original transcripts of prior education, Applicants who are not applying immediately after completing their studies should also present evidence of their recent employment. Test score reports from any tests that have been taken, including TOEFL, GMAT, SAT, etc.

**4. Financial Assets:** Applicants should present **full and complete financial documentation** to show that they have sufficient funds to cover the cost of their educational fees and living expenses while in the U.S. Fixed deposit accounts, current accounts, savings accounts and/or promissory notes belonging to the applicant's financial sponsor may be presented. **Original documents should be presented**-most Embassies will not need to keep copies.

**5. Evidence of Your Residence Outside the U.S.:** When applying for a student visa, applicants are applying for a nonimmigrant visa. Before a nonimmigrant visa may be issued, and applicant must establish to the satisfaction of the Consular Officer that they are not an intending immigrants. Applicants can do this by showing evidence of their family, economic and other social ties to a country outside the U.S. No relative, employer, or friend can "guarantee" an applicant's return in place of such evidence. Regardless of who is sponsoring the trip, the consular officer must look at the individual situation and decide whether the applicant meets the requirements on his/her own merits. Please note that consular officers adjudicate visas on the basis of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). This law states that "Whenever any person makes application for a visa...the burden of proof shall be upon such person to establish that he is eligible." U.S. immigration law requires consular officers to deny an applicant's application if he/she fails to present convincing evidence that he/she is not an intending immigrant.

## Getting the Visa

Every visa official has a list of requirements that he or she looks for in a visa application. If they are met, then the visa will be granted. If not, the application will be rejected. It is how these requirements are met that makes a visa decision seem subjective. For instance, the requirement for a student will return to his or her home country after completing studies forces the student to give logical, though-out evidence. On the other hand, if a student has nothing substantial to show, then the visa will not be issued.

Presenting proper documents alone does not determine the visa approval or denial. The visa officer knows that documents can be easily forged, so they can judge authenticity in less than a minute due to the large number of papers that they process every day. Therefore, presenting the individual case is the most important part in getting the visa. What the student says and how he or she says it matters a lot. Sometimes it can even make up for inadequate documentation. Success in obtaining a visa depends on both the proper documentation and giving a good presentation during the interview.

### Key Factors

- Academic Performance: U.S. universities have high standards and expectations of international students. Therefore, having a good academic record increases a student's chance of obtaining a visa.
- Financial Capabilities: U.S. universities are more expensive than most of the countries in the world. The U.S. government needs assurances that the student will not drop out of school or take a job illegally. I-20 or DS-2019 forms will list the amount for tuition and other expenses. It is the student's responsibility to provide solid evidence for any scholarships, grants, or loans that have been awarded. The student is also required to establish proof of his or her relationship with the sponsor, and to submit documentation of the sponsor's active and passive incomes.
- Strong Ties to Home Country: Under U.S. law, all applicants for non-immigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consulate officer that they are not. It is the student's responsibility to justify the visa application and provide convincing evidence that his or her intention is only to study in the U.S. The law states that the student must demonstrate sufficient economic, family, and social ties to his or her country to ensure that the stay in the U.S. will be temporary.

### Positive Points for Applications

- The student's proposed education or training would be very useful in the home country.
- The student's going for a highly valuable research-oriented education, such as drug discovery, or next generation technology.
- The student will learn international or U.S. business skills.
- The student will bring cultural or ethnic values and experiences to the U.S.
- The student has well-planned career goals with definite objectives.
- The student has chosen a university that will help him or her to attain those career goals.
- The student gives a good presentation of documents.
- The student gives simple, straight-forward, clear, and concise answers to the visa officer's questions.

### **Negative Points for Applications**

- The proposed education or training would not appear to be very useful in the home country.
- The indented education is already available in the home country.
- The student is not in very good academic standing.
- The student's intention is most likely to get a job and settle in the U.S.
- The student is financially incapable of studying in the U.S.
- The student has a poor presentation of documents.
- Financial support for education is completely based on university funding.

Visit <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english.html> for more information on all of the details about applying for a visa and ensuring that it is granted.