



Applying For a Non-Immigrant U.S. Visa

Information for International Students and Scholars

What is a non-immigrant U.S. visa?

A non-immigrant U.S. visa is an entry permit to the U.S. It is issued by the U.S. Department of State and is stamped in your passport.

Non-immigrant visas are for international visitors coming to the U.S. **temporarily** for a specific purpose such as study or work. This U.S. visa stamp allows you to request permission of the border inspector at a U.S. port-of-entry (e.g. airport or land border) to enter the U.S.

A visa alone does not guarantee entry into the U.S. You must also carry your other documents, including valid passport, and valid I-20, DS-2019 or I-797 Approval Notice.

Where do I get a U.S. visa?

You must obtain a U.S. visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate outside the U.S. Please consult the website of the U.S. Consulate/Embassy where you will apply for your visa to find out about application procedures.

http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html

How long will it take to get a U.S. visa?

June, July, and August are the busiest months in most U.S. Consulates, so interview appointments may be difficult to obtain during that period. To see the wait times for visas at particular U.S. Consulates, please check:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php

Due to background checks, mandatory visa interviews, and increased scrutiny of individuals studying or doing research in “sensitive fields,” you should be prepared for the possibility of delays in the processing of your visa application. If your field of study or research is on the Technology Alert List (available at the link below), you should obtain a letter from your professor explaining in detail the nature of your studies or research. This letter should be written in simple language so it can be easily understood by non-specialists.

In addition, applicants from certain countries may have additional processing requirements, which may delay the issuance of their U.S. visa stamp. Please check the following site to see if you will need to satisfy additional requirements:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1300.html

What do I need to apply for an F-1 student visa or J-1 student/scholar visa?

The U.S. Department of State website lists detailed instructions regarding the forms, documents, etc., which are required for the visa application. It is important that you bring everything to your visa interview to avoid needless delays in the processing of your application.

Documents you will need to bring to the U.S. Consulate / Embassy:

- Form DS-156 (Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form) together with Form DS-158. Some applicants will also be required to complete and sign Form DS-157 (special processing)
- SEVIS Form I-20 for F-1 students visas or SEVIS Form DS-2019 for J-1 student/scholar visas (from the U.S. university you plan to attend)
- Valid passport (valid for at least six months beyond the intended duration of your visit to the U.S.)
- One (1) photograph (50mm. x 50 mm.) that meets the requirements specified at this website:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1287.html

- Application fee
- Visa issuance fee (if required)
- Proof of payment of SEVIS Fee (Form I-901)
 - See the SEVIS Fee website for further information:
<http://www.fmjfee.com/index.jhtml>
- Transcripts and diplomas from current and/or previous institutions
- Original score reports of standardized tests required by the school (e.g. TOEFL, SAT) **(students only)**
- Financial evidence showing sufficient funds to cover educational and living expenses
- **Documents showing your “non-immigrant intent”** (i.e. documents which help to prove your ties to your home country and verify that you have no intentions of immigrating to the U.S.)
- Other requirements as determined by your U.S. Consulate

What is non-immigrant intent?

All applicants for **F or J visas** are required to demonstrate their intent to return to their home country following the completion of their studies or scholarly activities. There are several ways you can demonstrate your intent to return home:

- Be ready to explain clearly how you intend to utilize your degree or research experience at home after you finish your program
- Bring proof of ownership of any property (e.g. land, house, apartment) in your home country
- Bring bank statements for accounts you maintain in your home country

- Bring proof of a job offer or continuing employment in your home country
- Bring proof of your family's ties to your home country (e.g. property, business ownership, bank accounts, or other assets)

For additional information about applying for an F-1 or J-1 visa, we encourage you to visit the Department of State website:

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

What do continuing/returning students need in order to renew their U.S. student visa?

Please refer to the list of documents above for visa applications. In addition to these documents, you should bring your SUNY Canton transcripts with you. We recommend that you take a “certified letter” from International Programs Office, further verifying your full-time student status at SUNY Canton.

For additional information, check the U.S. Department of State website:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html#return

Can I apply for a U.S. visa in Canada?

While it is always recommended that you apply for a U.S. visa in your home country, some people apply for their U.S. visas in Canada. For information on applying for a U.S. visa at a U.S. Consulate in Canada, please visit the International Programs Office.