

U.S. VISA for international student



If you are an international student and you would like to study in the U.S., you will need a student visa.

The visa process is time-consuming, and students must get ready well in advance of their preferred start date.

The visa application requires an interview and it's a good idea for students to prepare and practice their answers.

ONCAMPUS experts can help students through this process, to successfully get a student visa to study in the U.S.

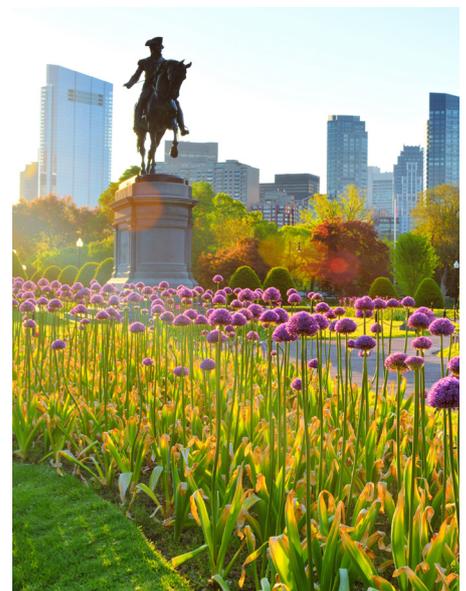


Apply for the F-1 visa

There are two US agencies that are involved in the visa application process for international students. The US State Department is in charge of the visa application process and issuing the visa. The US Department of Homeland Security takes over once you arrive in the U.S. and is responsible for enforcing the rules of your visa.

There are several types of visas in the U.S. ONCAMPUS students must apply for the F-1 student visa. When entering the U.S. for the first time, you will be given the I-94 form by the customs official and a copy of this form should be carried with you at all times.

A visa waiver program allows students from 37 participating countries to study in the U.S. without a visa under two conditions – the student's stay is under 90 days and the course of study includes no more than 18 hours of teaching per week. Students joining our ONCAMPUS Boston or Illinois Tech programs are not eligible for the visa waiver program and are advised to apply for the F-1 student visa.





VISA Application Process

In order to begin the student visa application process, the student must be accepted into an American institution and receive a Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20) from that institution. In addition to acceptance into a program, a student must also provide evidence that he/she has sufficient funds at their disposal to pay for tuition, room and board for the duration of their stay. This is essential and the I-20 cannot be issued without the appropriate financial documentation.

Once the student receives the I-20 they are able to make an appointment for a visa interview. Procedures on booking an interview vary from country to country and the most accurate information can be found at www.embassy.state.gov.

Students will need to provide the following items (further documents may be requested in addition to these):

- A valid passport
- A receipt for the paid non-refundable visa processing fee
- An I-901 form (a receipt showing that the required SEVIS fee is paid www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.html)
- Documented proof that the student or their financial sponsor will have enough money to cover tuition and living expenses for the first year of the student's stay (this amount can be found on the I-20 request form or website). This can come in the form of a notarized bank statement and/or a letter from the sponsor stating they will support the student. Visas can be issued up to 120 days before the scheduled date of departure. Appointments should therefore not be scheduled any earlier than this four-month period.



The visa interview

As part of the visa application process, you must take part in a personal interview. If you don't attend the interview, your visa application will automatically be rejected. If you cannot make the appointment for any reason, you must contact the Visa Office to reschedule.

Below are some sample questions you may be asked during your interview, but you may be asked about anything in your application. Therefore, it is important to be prepared by reading our guide about the visa interview – and practice!

Being knowledgeable about the school you will be attending is vital. Browse the school website, get to know details such as the school mascot, location, motto, degree courses, careers, and so on. Also, one of the objectives of the interview is to test your English language, so make sure you answer in English and do not use a translator.



Sample interview questions:

- What is the name of the school you wish to attend?
- Where is the school? What city is it in and what part of the US does it belong to?
- Did you use an education agent at any stage? Who is/was your agent and why did you choose them?
- Why do you wish to study in the US? Did you consider any other countries?
- What is the course name and the academic level you will study at?
- When does the course start and finish?
- Who is going to pay your tuition fees and living costs?
- Where have you arranged accommodation?
- Being able to make 'small talk' during the interview is important as well. This means being able to talk informally about things like the weather, news, your home country or sports.



Do attend

you must attend the interview, if you do not your application will be rejected.



Do answer

you should answer all questions fully and truthfully.



Do think

think about the course you are attending and know details about the school and degree program you have chosen.



Do speak

in English – being able to speak English is important, so always answer in English.



Do ask

if you are unsure about any question, make sure you ask for clarification.

The visa interview

You will also be asked to submit numerous documents at your interview. Make sure you have the following documents ready:

- Original I-20 form
- Proof of SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visit Information System) fee payment
- Completed DS-160 form (the non-immigrant visa application form)
- Certificate of enrolment in a school in the US
- Passport
- Academic transcripts (with translations, if not in English)
- Financial evidence used for the I-20 form
- Passport-sized photograph
- Throughout the visa application process, you must show you are a genuine student looking to further your education by studying in the US.



Arrival in the US

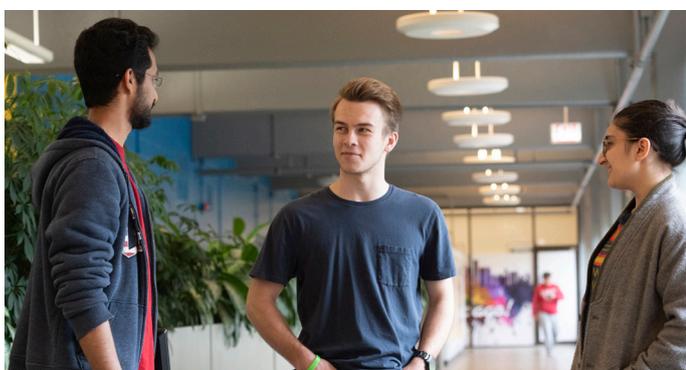
A student can arrive in the US no earlier than 30 days before the start date on the immigration document (I-20). If the student arrives later than the start date on the I-20, he/she should notify the school so the arrival date can be deferred. Students should report to our institutions within 15 days of the start date on the I-20.



Visa duration

A student's SEVIS I-20 is issued based upon the length of study program they choose to pursue. Students in one of our Pathway programs (ONCAMPUS Boston or International Year Illinois Tech) will be issued a one year (two-semester SEVIS I-20). For ONCAMPUS Boston, the I-20 will be issued by Curry College and for International Year, the I-20 will be issued by Illinois Tech. This I-20 may state that the student will be progressing to a degree-seeking program. Upon successful completion of the pathway program, the student's I-20 will be updated with the degree-seeking program. It can be extended for the length of the academic program and if the student transfers to a new accredited institution upon completion of their pathway, the I-20 will be transferred when proof of admission from the new institution is received.

A student's F-1 visa may be issued for one year or for longer. It's important to know that the visa is like a ticket into the United States and what keeps a student there legally is their valid I-20. So, if a visa expires while in the US but the student's I-20 is still valid, they are still considered to be there legally. If the student leaves the US and their visa has expired, they will need to apply for a new F-1 visa before they return there.



Practical Training

International students on an F-1 visa have the opportunity to take part in practical training (work experience) upon completion of their degree-seeking program. This is called Optional Practical Training (OPT). Students are eligible for OPT after they complete their undergraduate or graduate program. General OPT is up to 12 months and for STEM programs the OPT is up to 24 months. The OPT should be connected to the student's major. In rare cases, students might do pre-completion OPT which allows them to start OPT after one full academic year (this is not common). Some institutions also allow international students to have Curricular Practical Training (CPT). CPT takes place while a student is studying and must be tied to part of an established curriculum. CPT must be completed before graduating. It is dependent on an institution's policy and students must check with the institution to verify the policy.

The F-1 visa also allows students to work part-time while enrolled. This is only permitted on-campus for up to 20 hours each week.

Departure from the US

Upon completion of the student's program, they are eligible for a 60 day grace period within the United States. During these 60 days, the student is not required to be attending full time classes and may travel within the United States. If a student leaves the United States while on their grace period they will need a new visa in order to re-enter.

If a student cancels and does not complete their program or if they are terminated from their program. Then they are no longer a full time student and must leave the United States within 15 days