

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OVERVIEW

SOURCE: <https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/student.html#overview>

Generally, a citizen of a foreign country who wishes to enter the United States must first obtain a visa. A student must have a F-1 visa to study in the United States.

Student Acceptance at a Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Approved School

1. Before you can apply at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate for an F-1 student visa, you must first apply to and be accepted by a SEVP approved school. Ozark Christian College is a SEVP approved school.
2. When you are accepted by the U.S. school you plan to attend, you will be enrolled in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). You must pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee (approximately \$200).
3. After you are accepted, the U.S. school will provide you with a Form I-20 to present to the consular officer when you attend your visa interview. If your spouse and/or children intend to reside with you in the United States while you study, they must obtain individual Form I-20s, but they do not pay the SEVIS fee.

How to Apply for a Student Visa

There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you apply. Please consult the instructions available on the embassy or consulate website where you intend to apply.

Complete the Online Visa Application

1. **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-160** – Learn more about completing the DS-160. You must: (a) complete the online visa application and (b) print the application form confirmation page to bring to your interview.
2. **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. Your photo must be in the format explained in the Photograph Requirements section.

Schedule an Interview

Generally, you must schedule an appointment for your visa interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in the country where you live. You may schedule your interview at any U.S. Embassy or Consulate, but be aware that it may be difficult to qualify for a visa outside of your place of permanent residence. Wait times for interview appointments vary by location, season, and visa category, so you should apply for your visa early. Review the interview wait time for the location where you will apply:

New Students – F-1 student visas can be issued up to 120 days in advance of your course of study start date. However, you will not be allowed to enter the United States in F-1 status earlier than 30 days before your start date.

Continuing Students - May renew their visas at any time, as long as they have maintained student status and their SEVIS records are current. Continuing students may enter the United States at any time before their classes start.

Prepare for Your Interview

Pay the non-refundable visa application fee (approximately \$160) if required. When your visa is approved you may also pay a visa issuance fee. Review the instructions available on the website of the embassy where you will apply to learn more about fee payments.

Gather Required Documentation

Gather the following required documents before your visa interview:

- **Passport valid for travel to the United States** – Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the United States (unless exempt by country-specific agreements). If more than one person is included in your passport, each person who needs a visa must submit a separate application.
- **Nonimmigrant Visa Application** – Form DS-160 confirmation page
- **Application fee payment receipt** – If you are required to pay before your interview
- **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. If the photo upload fails, you must bring one printed photo in the format explained in the Photograph Requirements.
- **Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status-For Academic and Language Students, Form I-20 or Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (M-1) Student Status for Vocational Students, Form I-20** – Your school will send you a SEVIS-generated Form I-20 once they have entered your information in the SEVIS database. You and your school official must sign the Form I-20. All students, their spouse and minor children if they intend to reside in the United States with the student, must be registered in the Student and Exchange Visitor System (SEVIS). Each person receives an individual Form I-20.

Additional Documentation May Be Required

Review the instructions for how to apply for a visa on the website of the embassy or consulate where you will apply. Additional documents may be requested to establish that you are qualified. For example, additional requested documents may include evidence of:

- Your academic preparation, such as:
 - Transcripts, diplomas, degrees, or certificates from schools you attended; and
 - Standardized test scores required by your U.S. school;
- Your intent to depart the United States upon completion of the course of study; and
- How you will pay all educational, living and travel costs.

Attend Your Visa Interview

During your visa interview, a consular officer will determine whether you are qualified to receive a visa, and if so, which visa category is appropriate based on your purpose of travel. You will need to establish that you meet the requirements under U.S. law to receive the category of visa for which you are applying. Ink-free, digital fingerprint scans will be taken as part of your application process. They are usually taken during your interview, but this varies based on location. After your visa interview, your application may require further administrative

processing. You will be informed by the consular officer if further processing is necessary for your application.

When the visa is approved, you may pay a visa issuance fee if applicable to your nationality, and will be informed how your passport with visa will be returned to you. Review the visa processing time, to learn how soon your passport with visa will generally be ready.

Entering the United States

A visa allows a foreign citizen to travel to a U.S. port-of-entry (generally an airport) and request permission to enter the United States. **A visa does not guarantee entry into the United States.** The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials at the port-of-entry have authority to permit or deny admission to the United States. If you are allowed to enter the United States, the CBP official will provide an admission stamp or paper. Learn about procedures for students entering the United States on the CBP website under Arrival Procedures for Students or Exchange Visitors. Learn about admissions and entry requirements, restrictions about bringing food, agricultural products, and other restricted/prohibited goods, and more by reviewing the CBP website. Students with F visas have an additional 60 days after the program end date listed on Form I-20, and any authorized practical training, to depart the United States.

Additional Information

- We cannot guarantee that you will be issued a visa. Do not make final travel plans or buy tickets until you have a visa.
- For information about employment, review Students and Employment and Form I-765 Work Authorization Instructions on the USCIS website.
- Current student visa holders who are outside the United States should consult with their Designated School Officials.
- Spouse and children
 - Your spouse and unmarried, minor children who intend to reside with you during your study may apply for F-2 or M-2 visas. Although SEVIS fee payment is not required, your school must issue them an individual Form I-20, which is required to apply for their visas. You must provide a copy of your F-1 or M-1 visa and provide proof of relationship.
 - Your minor children are permitted to attend school in the United States while accompanying you.
- Unless canceled or revoked, a visa is valid until its expiration date. Therefore, a valid U.S. visa in an expired passport is still valid. If you have a valid visa in your expired passport, do not remove it from your expired passport. You may use your valid visa in your expired passport along with a new valid passport for travel and admission to the United States.

QUESTIONS?

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