



International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS)
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Applying for an F-1 or J-1 Visa

Citizens of all countries except Canada are required to have the appropriate visa stamps in their passports if they are to enter the United States in student or exchange visitor status. If you have a valid F-1 or J-1 visa in your passport, you will not need to obtain a new one.

To apply for an F-1 or J-1 visa, you will need to submit the following documents to the U.S. embassy or consulate:

1. *Nonimmigrant Visa Application* (Form DS-156).
2. *Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant* (Form DS-158).
3. The consular officer might also ask you to complete and sign *Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application* (Form DS-157).

The application forms are available at any U.S. consulate. Forms are also available on the Web at:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html

4. Receipt of payment of the appropriate application fees.

Application fees are broken down into two parts:

- The \$100 machine readable visa fee that every applicant must pay, and
- This rule requires F-1 and J-1 visa applicants to pay a fee of \$100 to cover the administration and maintenance costs of the Student and Exchange Information System (SEVIS).

5. One photograph (2 inches square [50 x 50 mm], showing full face, without head covering, against a light background). Please note: if your religious order requires your head to be covered, you should attach an explanation regarding this religious requirement.¹

¹ For more detailed information about the photograph, please consult:
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/info/info_1287.html

6. Passport valid for travel to the U.S. that must be valid for at least six months beyond the intended period of stay in the U.S.
7. Either a duly endorsed *Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status* (Form I-20) or a *Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status* (Form DS-2019).
8. If you are applying for your initial visa to study at SAIS, you will need evidence of admission to SAIS, such as the letter of admission. If you are applying for an initial J-1 visa as a prospective visiting scholar, you will need the invitation letter from SAIS.
9. If applying for a subsequent visa while studying or working at SAIS, you will need a letter from the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) director confirming your status at SAIS.
10. Original documents proving the availability of sufficient funds (the total of all amounts in item 7 on your form I-20 or item 5 on your form DS-2019). Please make sure to ask for **two originals** of all (non-SAIS) financial documents.
11. Documents that demonstrate that you intend to return home. See the handout entitled *Proving Nonimmigrant Intent* for more information.

Application procedures vary considerably from one country to another. We advise you to contact the consulate where you will submit your application for the most recent application procedures. You may also find such information on the following Website:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies_1214.html

If you have a visa interview, it will be short. During this time, you must make a good impression. Be positive and respond to the questions with clear, concise answers. If your wife and children will remain in your country, be prepared to explain how they will support themselves in your absence.