Applying for an F-1 or J-1 Visa

Citizens of all countries except Canada, Bermuda, the Bahamas, or contiguous islands 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.

All international students must obtain a visa certificate Form I-20 (F-1 visa) or Form DS-2019 (J-1 visa) from International Student & Scholar Office (ISSS) in advance. You must present a visa certificate Form I-20 (F-1 visa) or Form DS-2019 (J-1 visa) with other required documents in order to apply for a student visa at a U.S. consulate, or in case of students whose countries of citizenship are Canada, Bermuda, Bahamas or contiguous islands, to apply for student status at the U.S. port of entry.

International students whose country of citizenship is Canada, Bermuda, Bahamas, or contiguous islands do not need to apply for the student visa from the U.S. Embassy/Consulate. However, each student must obtain the visa certificate Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 from ISSS and pay SEVIS fee and obtain the receipt and need to present it to the U.S. Immigration Officer at the U.S. Port of Entry.

Before applying for the visa stamp at the US embassy/consulate, please review the information that appears on your Form I-20 or your Form DS-2019. If any information on your form is incorrect, contact the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) immediately using the contact information provided in the cover letter accompanying this packet.

**Note:** The spelling of your name on all U.S. visa and immigration documents must be exactly the same as the spelling of your name in your passport. The same is true for dependents (spouse or children accompanying you to the U.S.). If your name and/or date of birth on Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 are not exactly the same as the information in the passport, please request a corrected document. The incorrect document must be returned to ISSS.

In order to avoid possible problems applying for a visa or entering the U.S., your passport should be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date you plan to enter the country.
If you are a J-1 student (you have received Form DS-2019) and all information on your document is correct, sign your name in the place indicated for your signature. If you have dependents (husband or wife, or unmarried children under the age of 21) who will accompany you to the United States, a separate Form DS-2019 must be issued for each of them to use when entering the U.S. Check each form to make sure all of the information is correct and sign at the indicated places.

If you are an F-1 student (you have received Form I-20) and all information is correct, complete and sign your name on item 11 on page 1. If you have dependents (husband or wife, children under the age of 21) who will accompany you to the United States they must each have a separate I-20 document. Please review all the information and sign your name (not the name of the dependent) in item 11 on page 1.

General Instructions to apply for Student or Exchange Visitor Visa

1. Search the U.S. Embassy/Consulate website where you wish to apply for the student visa. [http://usembassy.gov](http://usembassy.gov) and check the visa application procedures.

2. International students whose country of citizenship is Canada, Bermuda, Bahamas, or contiguous islands do not need to apply for the visa from the US Embassy and need not to complete the visa application process but each student must pay SEVIS fee and obtain the receipt. (see SEVIS fee payment section in the pre-arrival information sheet)

3. Picture, make sure you have your picture scan and save it as a JPG file, please check the picture requirement. [http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html)

4. At the U.S. Embassy website, complete visa application on-line DS-160, you will have to upload your picture while completing the DS-160. At the end, please print the confirmation page with has a barcode number.

5. Contact the U.S. Embassy to schedule a visa appointment. You can get the contact information from its website. You will need to know your barcode number from the confirmation page of DS-160 when scheduling an appointment.

6. Pay SEVIS fee. All international students are required to pay SEVIS fee including students whose country of citizenship is Canada, Bermuda, Bahamas or contiguous islands.

7. Follow an instruction on the U.S. Embassy/Consulate website for the required visa application process including paying visa application fee.

8. Prepare the required support documents.

9. Report to the U.S. Embassy/Consulate for the visa interview.
10. 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.

**Required documents/Evidences for student visa**

In general, the following documents are required to apply for a student/exchange visitor visa. However, each U.S. Embassy/Consulate may have different procedures for the visa application processing. Please check on the website of the U.S. Embassy/Consulate for the visa instructions to ensure the proper required procedures and fees.  
http://www.usembassy.gov/  
In general, you will need;

1. Visa application Forms: DS-160. Please complete the forms online and print out the confirmation sheet at the end.

2. Receipt of the SEVIS fee payment.

3. Receipt of the visa application fee payment. (*method of payment varies from one country to another*)

4. Either a duly endorsed Form I-20 (F-1 visa) or Form DS-2019 (J-1 visa).

5. Photograph (s) showing full face without head coverage, against a light background.

6. Passport valid for at least 6 months beyond the intended period of stay.

7. Original documents proving the financial sufficient funds to meet the expenses. This has to be the total of all amounts stated on item 5 on Form DS-2019 or on item 7 on Form I-20.

8. Documents that demonstrate that you intend to depart the U.S. after completion of study. See the handout entitled *Proving Nonimmigrant Intent* for more information.

9. If you are applying for your initial visa to study at SAIS, you may need evidence of admission to SAIS, such as the letter of admission.

**Paying the SEVIS Fee**

As of September 1, 2004, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rule came into effect. This rule requires F-1 and J-1 visa applicants to pay a one-time fee to cover the administration and maintenance costs of the Student and Exchange Information System (SEVIS).
SEVIS FEE

- F-1 student visa................................... US$ 200.00
- J-1 student visa................................... US$ 180.00