

Arroyo Pacific Academy International Student Program

Student Visa Information 2012 - 2013

Provided by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State



International students studying in the U.S. (even if you only study for a short time) are required to obtain a student visa. Below you will find information that will help you understand what comprises the visa process and how to apply for a visa. Students are encouraged to apply for their visa early to provide ample time for visa processing. Students may apply for their visa as soon as they are prepared to do so.

The consular officer may need to get special clearances depending on the course of study and nationality of the student. This can take some additional time. For more information on applicants who may have additional processing requirements contact the Embassy or Consulate.

Students should note that Embassies and Consulates are able to issue your student visa 120 days or less, in advance of the course of study registration date. If you apply for your visa more than 120 days prior to your start date or registration date as provided on the Form I-20, the Embassy or Consulate will hold your application until it is able to issue the visa. Consular officials will use that extra time to accomplish any of the necessary special clearances or other processes that may be required.

Students are advised of the Department of Homeland Security regulation which requires that all initial or beginning students enter the U.S. 30 days or less in advance of the course of study start/report date as shown on the Form I-20. Please consider this date carefully when making travel plans to the U.S.

A beginning student who wants an earlier entry into the U.S. (more than 30 days prior to the course start date), must qualify for, and obtain a visitor visa. A prospective student notation will be shown on his/her visitor visa and the traveler will need to make the intent to study clear to the U.S. immigration inspector at port of entry. Before beginning any studies, he or she must obtain a **change of classification, filing Form I-539, Application for Change of Nonimmigrant Status**, and also submit the required Form I-20 to the Department of Homeland Security office where the application is made.

Please be aware that there is an **additional fee** for this process, and that one may not begin studies until the change of classification is approved. For fee details please see http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1263.html

Continuing students may apply for a new visa at any time, as long as they have been **maintaining student status and their SEVIS records are current.** Continuing students may also enter the U.S. at any time before their classes start

What is an I-20 form?

When Arroyo Pacific Academy admits an international student, it sends the student a non-immigration form called the I-20.

This form indicates your field of study (high school diploma), the length of your course (1 academic year), and the date when you must report to the school. The form I-20 allows a student to apply for a student visa known as the F-1.



Student Applicants for F-1 Student Visa



Please read this information for general information on how to apply for an F1 student visa. For additional student related information, visit the EducationUSA website at <http://educationusa.state.gov/> created by the Department of State and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at <http://exchanges.state.gov/> to learn about educational opportunities for undergraduate study, opportunities for scholars, financial aid, testing, admissions, and much more.

In most countries, first time student visa applicants are required to appear for an **in-person interview**. However, each embassy and consulate sets its own interview policies and procedures regarding student visas. Students should consult Embassy web sites or call for specific application instructions. Keep in mind that **June, July, and August are the busiest months** in most consular sections, and interview appointments are the most difficult to get during that period.

It is important to apply for your visa well in advance of your travel departure date. Students need to plan ahead to avoid having to make repeat visits to the Embassy. To the extent possible, **students should bring the documents suggested below**, as well as any other documents that might help establish their ties to the local community.

When Do I Need to Apply for My Student Visa?

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<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnnextoid=94d12c1a6855d010VgnVCM10000048f3d6a1RCRD&vgnnextchannel=db029c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>

Also you must submit the required Form I-20 to the Department of Homeland Security office where the application is made. Please be aware that one cannot begin studies until the change of classification is approved.

Continuing students may apply for a new visa at any time, as long as they have been maintaining student status and their SEVIS records are current. Continuing students may also enter the U.S. at any time before their classes start.

What is SEVIS and SEVP? What should you know about it?



The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is designed to help the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State better monitor school and exchange programs and F, M and J category visitors. Exchange visitor and student information is maintained in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is an Internet-based system that maintains accurate and current information on non-immigrant students (F and M visa), exchange visitors (J visa), and their dependents (F-2, M-2, and J-2). SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit mandatory information and event notifications via the Internet, to the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State (DOS) throughout a student or exchange visitor's stay in the United States. Go to the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Internet site and learn more at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/>

All student applicants must have a SEVIS generated I-20 issued by an educational institution approved by DHS, which they submit when they are applying for their student visa. Your school is responsible for entering your information for the I-20 student visa form into SEVIS. The consular officer will need to verify your I-20 record electronically through the SEVIS system in order to process your student visa application. Unless otherwise exempt, all F-1 or M-1 principal applicants must pay a SEVIS I-901 fee to the DHS for each individual program. See the **SEVP Fact Sheet** at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/factsheets.htm> and http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1263.html for a fee list. Students and exchange visitors should use Form I-901, the SEVIS Fee Application, to pay the SEVIS fee. Form I-901 will be available on the SEVIS fee website, the DHS SEVIS website, and at domestic DHS form centers.

All of the student's information is reported to SEVIS by Robert S. Walley, SEVIS Designated School Official while the student is enrolled at Arroyo Pacific Academy.

Applying for a Student Visa

As part of the visa application process, an interview at the embassy consular section is required for visa applicants from age 14 through 79. Persons age 13 and younger, and age 80 and older, generally do not require an interview, unless requested by embassy or consulate. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. It is important to remember that applying early and providing the requested documents does not guarantee that the student will receive a visa.



Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing time information for each U.S. Embassy or Consulate worldwide is available at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html for Visa wait time information, and on most embassy websites.

During the visa application process, usually at the interview, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken. Some visa applications require further administrative processing; go to http://travel.state.gov/visa/a_zindex/a_zindex_4353.html for specific details. Also, because each student's personal and academic situation is different; two students applying for same visa may be asked different questions and be required to submit different documents.

For that reason, the **guidelines that follow are general and can be abridged or expanded by consular officers** overseas, depending on each student's situation.

Required Documentation

Each applicant to Arroyo Pacific Academy for a student visa **must** submit these forms and documentation, and submit fees as explained below:



Form I-20A-B, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (F-1) Student Status-For Academic and Language Students. You will need to submit a SEVIS generated Form, I-20, which was provided to you by your school, Arroyo Pacific Academy. You and your school official must sign the I-20 form. All students, as well as their spouses and dependents must be registered in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), an Internet-based system that

maintains accurate and current information on non-immigrant students and exchange visitors and their dependents (F/M-2 visa holders). Your school is responsible for entering your information for the I-20 student visa form into SEVIS. **Students will also have to pay an SEVIS I-901 fee** for each program of study.

A completed application, Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant, **Form DS-156**, together with a **Form DS-158**, both forms must be completed and signed. Some applicants will also be required to complete and sign **Form DS-157**. A separate form is needed for children, even if they are included in a parent's passport. **The DS-156 must be the March 2006 date, electronic "e-form application."** Select Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form DS-156 to access the electronic version of the form DS-156. Forms may be downloaded from <http://www.state.gov/m/a/dir/forms/>

An **interview at the embassy consular section** is required for almost all visa applicants. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. During the visa interview, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken, as well as a digital photo. Some applicants will need additional screening, and will be notified when they apply.

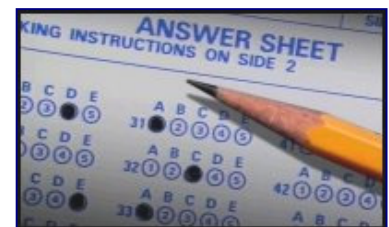
A **passport valid for travel to the United States** and with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the United States (unless country-specific agreements provide exemptions). If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must complete an application.

One (1) **2x2 photograph**. See the required photo format explained in nonimmigrant photograph requirements, go to http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html

A **MRV fee receipt** to show payment of the visa application fee, a visa issuance fee if applicable. Please consult the Visa Reciprocity Table at http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/fees/fees_3272.html and a separate **SEVIS I-901 fee receipt**. While all F-visa applicants must pay the MRV fee, including dependents, only the F-1 principal applicants must pay the SEVIS fee.

All Applicants Should Be Prepared To Provide

Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions attended; **scores from standardized tests** required by the educational institution such as the SLEP or TOEFL, **financial evidence** that shows your parents who are sponsoring you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period of your intended study. For example, if your sponsor is a salaried employee, please bring income tax documents and original bank books and/or statements. If your parents/sponsor own a business, please bring business registration, licenses, etc., and tax documents, as well as original bank books and/or statements.



Additional Information

No assurances regarding the issuance of visas can be given in advance. Therefore final travel plans or **the purchase of non refundable tickets should not be made until a visa has been issued.**

Unless previously canceled, a visa is valid until its expiration date. Therefore, if the traveler has a valid U.S. visa in an expired passport, do not remove the visa page from the expired passport. You may use it along with a new valid passport for travel and admission to the United States.

Entering the U.S. - Port of Entry



A visa allows a foreign citizen coming from abroad, to travel to the United States port-of entry and request permission to enter the U.S. Applicants should be aware that a visa does not guarantee entry into the United States. The Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials have authority to permit or deny admission to the United States. **Student visitors must have their Form I-20 in their possession** each time they enter the United States. In advance of travel, students should review important information about **Admissions/Entry requirements** at http://cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/id_visa/study_exchange/.

Upon arrival (at an international airport, seaport or land border crossing), you will be enrolled in the **US-VISIT entry-exit program** for details go to <http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/usv.shtm>.

Since Form I-94 documents your authorized stay in the U.S., it's very important to keep in your passport.

What Items Do Returning Students Need?

All applicants applying for renewals **must** submit:

1. A **passport valid** for at least six months;
2. An application **Form DS-156**, together with a **Form DS-158**. Both forms must be completed and signed. Some applicants will also be required to complete and sign Form DS-157. Blank forms are available without charge at all U.S. consular offices and on the Visa Services website under Visa Applications Forms;
3. A **receipt for visa processing fee**. A receipt showing payment of the visa application fee for each applicant, including each child listed in a parent's passport who is also applying for a U.S. visa, is needed;
4. A **new I-20 or an I-20** that has been endorsed on the back by a school official within the past 12 months.



All applicants applying for renewals **should be prepared** to submit:

1. A **certified copy of your grades** from the school in which you are enrolled;
2. **Financial documents** from you or your sponsor, showing your ability to cover the cost of your schooling.

How long may I stay on my F-1 student visa?

When you enter the United States on a student visa, you will usually be admitted for the duration of your student status. That means you may stay as long as you are a full time student, even if the F-1 visa in your passport expires while you are in America. For a student who has completed the course of studies shown on the I-20, and any authorized practical training, the student is allowed the following additional time in the U.S. before departure:



F-1 student - An additional 60 days, to prepare for departure from the U.S. or to transfer to another school.

As an example regarding duration of status, if you have a visa that is valid for five years that will expire on January 1, 2001, and you are admitted into the U.S. for the duration of your studies (often abbreviated in your passport or on your I-94 card as "D/S"), you may stay in the U.S. as long as you are a full time student. Even if January 1, 2001 passes and your visa expires while in America, you will still be in legal student status. However, if you depart the U.S. with an expired visa, you will need to obtain a new one before being able to return to America and resume your studies. A student visa cannot be renewed or re-issued in the United States; it must be done at an Embassy or Consulate abroad.

Further Visa Inquiries

Questions on visa application procedures and visa ineligibilities should be made to the American consular office abroad by the applicant. Before submitting your inquiry, we request that you carefully review this web site at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html and also the Embassy Consular web site abroad. Very often you will find the information you need.

If your inquiry concerns a visa case in progress overseas, you should first contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate handling your case for status information. Select **U.S. Embassy or Consulate** at <http://www.usembassy.gov/> and you can choose the Embassy or Consulate Internet site you need to contact.

If you have additional inquiries about F student visas, please visit <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/> and <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/>.

