

Immigration and Visas for I-20

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Student visa application and SEVIS fee

Applying for a student visa

You will apply for a visa at the U.S. embassy or consulate in your home country. You should apply well in advance of the date you would like to arrive in the US. Your I-20 form indicates the date by which you are required to arrive in the U.S. under “Program Start Date.” Keep in mind that if you are a new student coming to the U.S. for the first time, you can be admitted to the U.S. no more than 30 days before the Program Start Date on your I-20. The date listed under “Earliest Admission Date” is the earliest that you can arrive to the U.S. before starting classes.

Appointments are required for all non-immigrant visa applications, and some U.S. embassies and consulates require that appointments be made at least six to eight weeks in advance.

- Find a U.S. embassy near you at [USEMBASSY.GOV](https://usembassy.gov)

SEVIS Fee

The United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) require a \$350 fee* (F-1 visas) for the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). SEVIS is the database for international students and scholars in the United States. The SEVIS fee is mandatory and required for all international students and scholars who want to study in the U.S.

Please note: This fee must be paid prior to your visa appointment. The U.S. embassy will reject your visa application and ask you to pay the SEVIS fee before you apply for an F-1 visa. The SEVIS fee can only be processed by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) via the internet or the Western Union Quick Pay service.

*Fees are subject to change without notice.

Please note: Canadian students are required to pay the SEVIS fee but not required to apply for the F-1 visa. This is applicable only to Canadians.

How to pay the SEVIS and visa fees

How to pay the SEVIS fee

Before you start, you must know your SEVIS ID number. This number is on your I-20 and looks like this: N000 _ _ _ _ _ . You will also need the F-1 school code.

- Indiana Tech F-1 School Code: **CHI214F10027000**

The fee can be paid electronically by completing the I-901 form through the internet and using a valid credit card. Go to [FMJFEE.COM](https://fmjfee.com).

- A tutorial on how to make this payment can be found at [ICE.GOV/SEVIS/I901](https://ice.gov/sevis/i901)

International students in more than 130 countries are able to pay the I-901 SEVIS fee locally using the Western Union Quick Pay service.

Methods of Payment

To Pay Online

Have your I-20 form, valid credit card and your valid passport ready and visit [FMJFEE.COM](https://fmjfee.com) to apply online. Once you complete the application, print out the last screen/page to indicate that your payment is submitted and keep it for your own record. After your payment is submitted, call the U.S. embassy or consulate near you to apply for an F-1 student visa. Canadians are not required to apply for a visa.

Note: If you failed to pay the SEVIS fee using your credit card from overseas, you may find it easier to have someone in the United States pay the fee for you. If someone else fills out the form for you, be sure you give that person a copy of your form I-20, as well as a copy of your passport. Whoever fills out the form will need your personal information exactly as it appears on the I-20 form and your official documents.

SEVIS I 901 Fee Payment by Western Union Quick Pay

- Instructions can be found via [ICE.GOV/SEVIS/I901/WU-INSTRUCTIONS](https://ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu-instructions)

Visa Fee

Follow the instructions given by the U.S. consulate in the city where you will apply for your visa. Each country is different; therefore you must follow the guidelines provided to you.

Scheduling a visa appointment

Visa Appointment

To make a visa appointment please visit U.S. embassy website in your home country. You can find a list of all embassies and consulates here:

- ▶ [USEMBASSY.GOV](https://usembassy.gov)

What to bring to a Visa Appointment

Visit the embassy or consulate website for access to the application form, photo requirements and visa fee. Additional documents you may need to bring with you include:**

- ▶ A valid passport
- ▶ Indiana Tech I-20
- ▶ A completed DS-160 form
- ▶ The form DS-160 must be the electronic ‘e-form application.’ This form is available at [CEAC.STATE.GOV](https://ceac.state.gov)
- ▶ One 2”x2” photograph. Information on the type of photograph is available at [TRAVEL.STATE.GOV/CONTENT/TRAVEL/EN/US-VISAS/VISA-INFORMATION-RESOURCES/PHOTOS.HTML](https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html)
- ▶ A receipt to show payment of visa fee
- ▶ Payment receipt of SEVIS fee
- ▶ Indiana Tech acceptance letter
- ▶ Indiana Tech scholarship letter (if applicable)
- ▶ Proof of financial support
- ▶ Official test scores and academic records

Applicants with dependents must also provide:

- ▶ Proof of the student’s relationship to his/her spouse and/or children (e.g. marriage/birth certificates)
- ▶ Dependent’s I-20 issued by Indiana Tech
- ▶ Proof of additional funds to support their stay in the United States

***Be sure to review the embassy or consulate website for a list of items needed for the visa interview appointment. This can vary depending on the embassy or consulate.*

Tips when applying for a non-immigrant visa

- 1. Ties to your home country:** Under U.S. law, all applicants for non-immigrant visas, such as student visas, are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. This may be things that bind you to your home town, homeland, or current place of residence (i.e. job, family, financial prospects that you will own or inherit, investments, etc.) If you are a prospective undergraduate student, the interviewing officer may ask about specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans and career prospects in your home country. Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter which can guarantee visa issuance. If you have applied for the U.S. Green Card Lottery, you may be asked if you are intending to immigrate. A simple answer would be that you applied for the lottery since it was available but not with a specific intent to immigrate. If you overstayed your authorized stay in the U.S. previously, be prepared to explain what happened clearly and concisely, with documentation if available.
- 2. English:** Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview, but do NOT prepare speeches! If you are coming to the United States solely to study intensive English, be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you in your home country.
- 3. Speak for yourself:** Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf. If you are a minor applying for a high school program and need your parents there in case there are questions, for example about funding, they should wait in the waiting room.
- 4. Know the program and how it fits your career plans:** If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the U.S. relates to your future professional career when you return home.
- 5. Be brief:** Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

Tips when applying for a non-immigrant visa

6. Additional documentation: It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time, if you're lucky.

7. Not all countries are equal: Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the U.S. as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the U.S.

8. Employment: Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students do work off campus during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program. If your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the U.S. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the U.S. Volunteer work and attending school part time are permitted activities.

9. Dependents remaining at home: If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

10. Maintain a positive attitude: Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overturn the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

Source: The above information has been taken from the NAFSA: Association of International Educators, website: nafsa.org. NAFSA would like to credit Gerald A. Wunsch, Esq. and Martha Wailes for their contributions to this document. NAFSA also appreciates the input of the U.S. Department of State.

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