



OBTAINING YOUR STUDENT VISA

Read the section below that applies to your visa type (either F-1 or J-1), then read the *Visa Application Tips* section carefully.

F-1 Visa

You will receive your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) I-20 form once you have confirmed your enrollment and submitted the appropriate financial documentation. The form is a bar-coded original that will be scanned at the port of entry each time you enter the United States. Immigration officials will not accept a copy of your SEVIS I-20 form. You will need your original throughout the visa application process, upon entry into the United States, and during your entire stay in the country.

Students Arriving From Outside the United States

To apply for an F-1 student visa, you will need to bring your letter of admission, I-20, original copies of your financial support documents, and other supporting documents (see *Visa Application Tips* on the back of this sheet and visit www.iss.wisc.edu/Tutorial/index.htm) when applying for your visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate. Read page two of your I-20 form and sign item 11 (student certification) on page one of the form. Make sure you understand the conditions placed on your entry to the United States. You must attend the university whose I-20 you present at the U.S. embassy. If you receive I-20 forms from more than one university, decide carefully which university you wish to attend, and then present only that I-20 to the embassy. When you arrive in the United States, you will need to present border officials with your I-20 form and financial documents. You must report to International Student Services (ISS) upon your arrival at the University of Wisconsin. Visit www.iss.wisc.edu for more information about this mandatory registration.

Students Transferring to UW–Madison From Another University Within the United States

If you plan to travel outside the United States before moving to Madison and your visa is still valid, present your new I-20 form issued by UW-Madison and your financial documents at the port of entry when you reenter the country. Border officials may take the I-20, which they will then mail to UW–Madison. The ISS office at UW–Madison will return your form to you after you arrive on campus. You must report to International Student Services (ISS) upon your arrival at University of Wisconsin. Visit www.iss.wisc.edu for more information about this mandatory registration.

If you plan to travel outside the United States before moving to Madison and you need to renew your visa, bring both the I-20 issued by UW-Madison as well as the I-20 from your previous institution, your letter of admission, original copies of your financial support documents, and other supporting documents (see *Visa Application Tips* or visit www.iss.wisc.edu/Tutorial/index.htm) when applying for your visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate. You must report to International Student Services (ISS) upon your arrival at University of Wisconsin. Visit www.iss.wisc.edu for more information about this mandatory registration.

If you do not plan to leave and reenter the United States, you will need to bring the I-20 form issued by UW-Madison with you when you report for mandatory registration with ISS upon arrival at UW–Madison (visit www.iss.wisc.edu for more information about this required campus check in).

J-1 Visa

You will receive your Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) DS-2019 form once you have confirmed your enrollment and submitted the appropriate financial documentation. The form is a bar-coded U.S. immigration form, which you'll need to present at a U.S. embassy or consulate in order to apply for your J-1 student visa. You will need your original DS-2019 form throughout the visa application process, upon entry into the United States, and during your entire stay in the country. To apply for a J-1 student visa, you will need to submit your letter of admission, DS-2019 form, original copies of your financial support documents, and other supporting documents (see *Visa Application Tips* or visit www.iss.wisc.edu/Tutorial/index.htm) to a U.S. embassy or consulate. Read and complete the required portions of the DS-2019. Make sure you

Visa Application Tips

Understand the Embassy's Requirements

Application procedures and required documents may vary from one embassy to another. You will need to find out about the specific application procedures and required documents for the U.S. embassy or consulate where you will apply for your visa. You can find contact information for U.S. embassies on the Web at www.usembassy.state.gov.

Gather and Prepare Your Documents

Following is a list of documents and materials the U.S. embassy or consulate may require. Begin preparing these documents immediately:

1. Appropriate U.S. visa application, as instructed by the U.S. embassy or consulate.
2. A passport valid for at least six months after your proposed date of entry into the United States.
3. One photograph 2 inches square (50x50mm), showing full face against a light background.
4. A receipt for the visa processing fee.
5. A receipt for the SEVIS I-901 fee. Information is available at www.ice.gov/sevis/i901.
6. All pages of your I-20 (for F-1) or DS-2019 (for J-1). Be sure to sign the form where indicated.
7. Original financial documentation that shows you or your financial sponsors have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses. Use the same documentation you submitted with your application for admission.
8. Academic records from your previous institutions.
9. Score reports from the standardized tests we require for admission (e.g., TOEFL, SAT, ACT).
10. Proof of your ties to a residence in your home country to indicate you have no intention of abandoning your permanent residence.

Important Points to Remember

Below is a list of important points to understand and remember when applying for a student visa:

1. **Ties to your home country.** Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas (e.g., student visas) are viewed as having the intention of emigrating permanently to the United States until they can convince the consular officer otherwise. 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. "Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown or current place of residence, such as a job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. The interviewing officer may ask about your 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, so there is no one explanation or single document that can guarantee visa issuance. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your studies.
2. **English.** Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. You may want to practice conversing in English with a native speaker before the interview.
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. You will create a negative impression if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf. If family members wish to accompany you to the embassy, they should wait in the waiting room.
4. **Your academic program and career plans.** If you are not able to explain the reasons you intend to 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 emigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future professional career when you return to your home country.
5. **Be brief.** Because of the volumes of visa applications U.S. embassies receive, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct an efficient interview. They must make a decision on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview. The initial impression is critical. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.
6. **Supplemental documentation.** Documents that you are submitting should be clear and easy to read. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have at most 2–3 minutes of interview time.
7. **Current climate in your country.** Applicants from countries suffering economic or political problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants may have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to have the intention of permanent emigration to the United States. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the United States.
8. **Employment.** Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study, not to work during your program or after graduation. While many students do work during their studies, this type of employment is incidental.
9. **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 submit in order to overcome the refusal, and request a written explanation of why your visa application has been denied.
10. **Background check.** Depending on your major and/or your country of origin, you may be subject to a background check. This check may result in a delay in obtaining your visa. If you are delayed beyond the start date of your program and still intend to attend UW–Madison, contact the Office of Admissions and International Student Services.

Failure to Obtain a Visa

If you are unable to obtain a student visa for your intended term of enrollment at the UW–Madison and you wish to request admission for the following term, please return your I-20 or DS-2019 form to our office with an explanation of the visa denial and submit a new admission application for the new term. We cannot approve your admission for the new term without an updated admission application. You may apply online or download and print a copy of the application at www.admissions.wisc.edu.