



Where to Apply for an F or J visa

Applying in the student's country of home residence

The Department of Homeland Security regulations first direct any nonimmigrant to apply for a visa "at the consulate having jurisdiction over the non-immigrant's place of residence."

Applying in a country other than student's home country of citizenship

The regulations permit an applicant to apply for a visa at any consular jurisdiction in which he or she is physically present, but only if the consulate has agreed to process visa applications for citizens from another country (these are referred to as "Third Country Nationals" [TCN]). Obtaining a visa at a U.S. consulate outside of the student's home country of residence is often more difficult or more time consuming because the consul (interviewing consular officer) must evaluate the applicant's ties to their country of residence and evaluate finances for a country they are not likely to be familiar with. Consuls in the home country of residence are better able to evaluate the applicant's ties to their county of residence.

For more information on U.S. Embassies and Consular Posts, go to the following website:

<http://www.usembassy.gov/>

Also, please refer to the following websites for additional information on how to apply for your F-1 or J-1 student visa as well as steps to take once your visa has been granted. These sites also list the regulations you will need to be aware of and abide by in order to maintain a legal status while you are studying in the U.S.:

<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>

<https://educationusa.state.gov/>

When to Apply for an F or J visa

The earliest an F-1/J-1 student visa can be issued by a U.S. Embassy or Consulate is 120 days before the start date listed on your form I-20/DS-2019. Appointments are required for visa application and interview. Many countries have appointments two to three weeks from the date the appointment is made, so you need to allow plenty of time. Also, for male applicants, there are additional security background checks that take place and these may delay the issuance of a visa by 30 days or more.

When You May Enter the U.S.

You are allowed to enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before your program start date. If you try to enter more than 30 days before, you will not be permitted to enter the U.S. despite having a valid F-1/J-1 entry visa in your passport. In order for International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) to check you in, you must enter the U.S. as an F-1/J-1 student only. Your entry status will be noted on your *I-94 Departure Record* which can be found online at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>. ISSS will look up your record at your check-in appointment when you arrive on campus.

An application for an F or J visa must include the following items:

- ✓ Properly completed form I-20 or DS-2019 (from Loma Linda University – International Student & Scholar Services) with a program acceptance letter.
- ✓ Receipt from your having paid the *Student and Exchange Visitor Information System* (SEVIS) **I-901 fee**. This fee is a U.S. Department of Homeland Security requirement and is separate from the visa application fee, noted below, from the U.S. Department of State. For more information about payment of the I-901 fee – <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html#>
- ✓ Evidence of financial ability to meet the estimated expenses for your program.
- ✓ Evidence of English ability sufficient for course of study.
- ✓ Evidence of intent to depart (i.e. the home-time issues) to the U.S. after completion of your program.
- ✓ Passport valid for at least 6 months into the future beyond the interview appointment.
- ✓ Photograph requirements are very strict for photograph size, type and quality; please check with the consulate for their specifications.
- ✓ Application fees -- all applicants must pay this fee. Some applicants, according to nationality and type of visa, must also pay a visa issuance fee. Please refer to the embassy or consulate's website for details on payment of this/these fee(s).
- ✓ Online Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application, **Form DS-160**

***NOTE:** You may obtain forms and instructions for the F-1/J-1 visa application process from the following website:

- <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>
- Select U.S. Visas
 - Study & Exchange
 - F Student Visas -or-
 - J Exchange Visitor Visa