

U.S. Visa and Immigration-related Information: F-1 Students

As you prepare for your upcoming exchange placement in your USA host university, here is some useful information and links to help you apply for your student visa. Please note these are the details for students that will be attending an American university under F-1 status. If you are applying for J-1 status, please consult our document '[U.S. Visa and Immigration-related Information: J-1 Students](#)'. For every immigration document you receive, make sure to check that the spelling of your name and your date of birth are exactly the same as listed on your passport. For additional information on the visa and immigration process for students, please visit <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/>.

1. Receiving an I-20 form from your American host university

If you receive your pre-arrival guide by post, your I-20 form will be included in the packet. You will be required to sign and submit this document when you apply for a visa at the U.S. embassy.

2. Complete the DS-160 Form

The DS-160 form is a non-immigrant electronic visa application, available by logging on to <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>.

3. Pay the visa application fee

Pay the visa application fee by following the instructions on the U.S. Department of State's Appointment Service website - <https://ais.usvisa-info.com/en-IE/niv/information/fee>.

4. Pay the SEVIS I-901 fee

This is a separate fee that student visa applicants are required to pay. You can pay the fee online by logging on to www.fmjfee.com. Be sure to input your name exactly as it appears on the I-20 form. Print the receipt and make sure to bring it with you to your visa interview. Make copies of the receipt and keep it with your other important immigration documents.

5. Make a visa appointment at the U.S. Embassy

Your next step is to schedule an appointment for your visa interview at the U.S. Embassy in Dublin. Schedule the appointment as early as possible as the wait time for a visa varies, but is always longer during the months of June, July and August. Book your appointment by logging on to the website of the U.S. Department of State Visa Appointment Service@ <https://ais.usvisa-info.com/en-ie/niv>.

6. Prepare and bring the following to your visa interview

- A passport valid for at least six months
- Form I-20 (be sure to sign your name and date it)
- Host university offer letter
- Completed visa application forms (a printed I-20 confirmation notice)
- Two 2" x 2" photographs in the prescribed format (<https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/photos.html>)
- A receipt of the paid SEVIS I-901 fee
- Financial evidence (bank statement) that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your living expenses during the period of your study
- Confirmation letter from your Exchange coordinator at University of Galway stating you will be returning to University of Galway after your exchange programme to complete your studies and graduate

7. Remain calm and answer all of the Visa Officer's questions openly and honestly

Make sure you explain your goal, field and level of study, duration and future plans such as career aspirations.

8. Plan your arrival

Keep in mind, you will not be allowed enter the country more than 30 days before the start of your programme if you are an initial entry student. Returning students do not have this requirement. Plan to arrive before the mandatory orientation programme, which generally begins the week before classes begin.

Make two sets of copies of your immigration documents - leave one with your family and one in your luggage. Always carry your original I-20 form, offer letter and passport with you, and not **in** your luggage!

9. As you arrive at your port of entry

Proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers. Present the following documents:

- Passport
- Form DS-2019
- Customs Declaration Form CF-6059 (The Customs and Declaration Form should reflect the address where you will reside - generally handed out on the plane)

All visitors entering the US must state their reasons for wishing to enter the country. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. *It is important that you tell the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer that you will be a student.* Be prepared to include the name and address of the school programme where you will enrol/participate. Your offer letter from the host university will be proof of this.

Once your inspection is successfully completed, the inspecting officer will:

Stamp your passport: Please make sure this is stamped with the correct date and visa type (J) and is marked D/S for Duration of Status.

Assign you an Admission Number (I-94): You can locate your I-94 number by visiting the website <http://cbp.gov/i94>.

Secondary Inspection at the Port of Entry

If the CBP officer at the port of entry cannot initially verify your information or you do not have all of the required documentation, you may be directed to an interview area known as 'Secondary Inspection'. Secondary Inspection allows inspectors to conduct additional research in order to verify information without causing delays for other arriving passengers.

The inspector will first attempt to verify your status by using the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), the database from which your school or programme issued your paper Form DS-2019.

10. Immigration Document Review

All international students and scholars must complete an Immigration Document Review with the International Office at their host university. Please present yourself to the Exchange coordinator at your host university for information on this. Their international office must report your arrival within

the SEVIS system. If this report is not submitted, you may be considered to be in violation of your status in the United States.

In order to complete this process, you must provide the following items: passport, visa and DS-2019 to be scanned, along with your current local address and emergency contact information.