

Preparing for your F-1 Visa Interview



Complete these **steps** to prepare for your visa interview:

1. Contact your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate to ask about how to get an F-1 international student visa. For a list of Consulates and Embassies see: <http://usembassy.state.gov>



2. Complete visa Form DS-160: Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application.

Form DS-160 is submitted electronically to the Department of State website via the Internet: <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv>

If you have questions on how to complete the form, see: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/forms/us-visas/visa-information-resources/forms/ds-160-online-non-immigrant-visa-application/ds-160-faqs.html> When complete, print and keep the DS-160 barcode page. (You will not need to print the full application.)

NOTE: You should decide which school you want to attend BEFORE you apply for the visa, or pay the SEVIS Fee (Step 5), because the name of the school that issued your I-20 will be written on your visa. The form will instruct you to upload your digital photo as part of completing the online visa application form.

3. Follow the U.S. Embassy/Consulate's instructions to schedule a visa interview.

It is important to apply for your F-1 student visa as far in advance as possible. Many consulates recommend that appointments be made no more than 90 days from the intended date of travel, but some can make earlier arrangements for interviews.



4. Pay the Visa Application Fee. Follow instructions provided by your local U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Keep the receipt as you will need it as proof of payment at your interview.

5. Pay the SEVIS fee by completing Form I-901 online at www.FMJfee.com at least three (3) days before your visa interview. (**NOTE:** The SEVIS fee is only needed if your I-20 is marked for "initial" attendance.) When completing the form, be sure to write your name exactly how it appears on your passport and I-20 form. Once payment is complete, keep a copy of the SEVIS receipt as you will need it at your visa interview. (*Make sure to keep the receipt and bring it with you to the U.S. as well.*)



STUDENT EXCHANGE VISITOR INFORMATION SYSTEM

6. Prepare and bring the documents required by the U.S. Embassy/Consulate for your visa interview. Because the requirements differ from country to country, you should contact the U.S. Embassy/Consulate to confirm what documentation you need. These will likely include:

- A passport valid for at least six months into the future
- Form I-20 (don't forget to sign it!)
- Admission letter to CSUEB
- DS-160 barcode page
- Receipt for the visa application fee
- Receipt for the SEVIS fee, if applicable
- Documents to demonstrate financial support/sufficient funds for U.S. study (e.g. bank statement)
- Any information that shows your intention to return home after completion of your academic program, such as proof of property, family or other ties to your community
- Some embassies/consulates require visa applicants to bring a photo and/or academic credentials



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

Maintaining Legal F-1 Status (a summary)

Follow these **rules** to maintain your visa status:

- **Keep a valid I-20 which reflects your current degree level and program of study at all times.** (Check the Program End Date on your I-20).
- **Notify CIE of any change in your degree program or level** so that we can inform SEVIS of the change within the required time (within 15 days of the beginning of your new program).
- If you are unable to finish all degree requirements before the Program End Date on your I-20, you must **apply for a Program Extension BEFORE your I-20 expires.**
- **Maintain a valid passport (with validity at least six months into the future) at all times.** (You must contact your Embassy or consulate to extend your passport).
- **Refrain from unauthorized employment.** See below for more employment information.
- **Notify the University of any change to your local U.S. address, e-mail address or phone number within 10 days.** (Log into MyCSUEB to update your contact information – note: your address cannot be a Post Office Box).
- **Maintain full-time enrollment.** F-1 students are required to enroll full-time each semester. All exceptions to full-time enrollment are defined by USCIS, and must be approved by an International Student Advisor BEFORE dropping any courses which will put you less than full-time. Please see the definition of ‘full-time:’
 - o Undergraduate students must enroll in a minimum of 12 units per semester.
 - o Graduate students must enroll in a minimum of 8 units per semester.

Note: F-1 students may use only one online class per semester to count towards full-time enrollment.

Employment for F-1 Students

There are several types of employment authorization for F-1 students. **Please see an International Student Advisor if you have questions about work authorization BEFORE beginning any type of employment.** Unauthorized employment is a serious violation of your immigration status.

OFF-CAMPUS

For questions and details about off-campus employment opportunities, please attend International Orientation or visit the CIE. F-1 students must study in the U.S. for one full academic year before applying for any off-campus employment.

ON-CAMPUS

As an F-1 student, you are eligible to work on-campus no more than 20 hours per week while you are enrolled full-time, or 40 hours per week during an authorized vacation term (summer) and breaks between semesters. You are not allowed to work on-campus after you complete your degree program. The online job board Handshake, which is accessible via the CSUEB Academic Advising and Career Education (AAACE) webpage, is one source for on-campus job postings.

Dependents (F-2 visa status)

If your dependents (spouse and/or children) will be coming to the U.S, you will need to request a separate I-20 for each of them. You must also demonstrate additional sources of financial support for them. Your dependents will use the I-20 and financial documentation to apply for the F-2 visa(s) at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy.

Please note: F-2 dependents can NEVER work in the U.S.

If your F-2 spouse wishes to study full-time at the university level, he or she must first change to F-1 status. F-2 children may engage in full-time elementary or secondary school, but must apply to change to F-1 status to attend U.S. college/university full-time or to study with the intent of gaining a degree.

An F-2 spouse or F-2 child may enroll in part-time classes that are recreational or related to their interests or hobbies.

Other family members (parents, brothers, sisters, etc.) may be able to visit you (usually on B-2 visitor status).