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STUDY IN

USA

STUDENT GUIDE



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

With over 3900+ universities/institutes across the country, the United States of America (USA) has dominated the globe in being the most popular university destination for students from all over the world. Many universities in USA continue to maintain a strong presence among the best ranked education institutions in the world. They all offer a wide range of degrees and courses in all academic fields. The other primary reasons why the USA is the most sought after study destination is the fact that it provides study programs which are very flexible and are specially designed to prepare students for real-life experiences.

U.S. takes pride in its technological advancement and it has made sure that all spectrums of the education sector are well equipped with the latest technology. The U.S. is a very welcoming place for Indian students. Each U.S. university has an international student services office with trained counselors available to answer your questions and guide you through the process of adaption to U.S. university life. The international student services office also organizes a variety of regularly scheduled events for international students. Many U.S. campuses also have Indian student associations, which also organize events on a regular basis.

There are many scholarships that are available exclusively for Indian students who want to study in the U.S. Most such scholarships are provided in the form of fee waivers and are awarded to meritorious students. However the competition to avail these scholarships is very high and make sure you check the criteria carefully, along with the application closing date.

The U.S. is home to more than 324 million people, making it the third-largest country in the world by population.

Capital
WASHINGTON DC

Currency
US DOLLAR (\$)

Language
ENGLISH



Important Factors for University / Institute Selection

- Admission Requirement
- Course Offered
- Tuition Fee
- Location & Climate
- Scholarships & Bursaries
- Indian Students Acceptance Rate



Application Process

Students need to submit separate applications to each course (or program) that they want to apply to. Students can apply to as many universities as they wish, however for time and cost purposes we recommend you choose 5-7 universities. Each U.S. university and college sets its own admission standards and decides which applicants meet those standards.

- Identify the correct online
- Many universities will need you to create an account in order to apply
- Start filling the application form providing all details
- Basic contents are your personal profile, academic profile, financial background, your statement of purpose and recommendations
- Pay the application fee (The fee for each application is anything between US\$ 35 to US\$120. This money pays for processing your application and is non-refundable, even if you aren't admitted to the school). Payment can be made using international credit or debit card
- Attach all academic documents, test scores (TOEFL or IELTS, GRE, SAT)
- Attach financial documents, financial declaration document
- Once submitted – print all the application along with supporting documents and courier it all to the address provided on the university website



5-8	Faculty review, mainly looking at academic scores, statement of purpose, resume and other credentials
8-12	Decision made and students are notified. If accepted then Letter of Offer or Form I-20 is generated and sent to the student

All About the I-20 Form

The I-20 form is issued by the U.S. university/institute as a confirmation of an international students admission into a program. This document is issued by the **Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP)** certified school, college or university stating:

that the student has satisfied all the requirements

- that a student has been admitted to a full-time study program and
- that he/she has demonstrated sufficient financial resources to study and live in the U.S. for the duration of our course of study.

This Form I-20 is an important document that you should keep safe, as you will need it throughout the international student life cycle

Once you receive the I-20 (Admission Letter) then you can start the visa application procedures. Most universities require students to pay a deposit by a certain deadline in order to reserve the seat. For international students, this deposit can vary and be as high as a semester's or a full year's tuition.



Student Visas

There are 3 types of student visas

1. F1 Student Visa

- Students applying for a program that requires more than 18 hours of study in a week require an F1 visa. This includes all undergraduate programs as well as graduate programs like MS, MBA, etc.
- Spouses or children accompanying F-1 visa recipients will travel on an F-2 visa. Please note that spouses are not able to work but may accompany and/or apply for their own visa to the U.S. to work or study.

2. J1 Exchange Visitor Visa

* The J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa is for students, visiting scholars or lecturers pursuing an exchange program. For example, Fulbright scholars and many students on short-term study abroad programs from Indian universities will travel to the U.S. on a J-1 visa.

* J1 visa is usually sought by a working professional who goes to America on an exchange program, hence the name Exchange Visitor Visa. This may include a 10-month vocational training or some research fellowship, etc. Whichever be the case, the applicants would be notified for the same by the respective institutions.

* Spouses or children accompanying J-1 Visa recipients will travel on a J-2 Visa. Please note that spouses are able to work when permission is obtained in advance.

3. M-1 Vocational/ Non-Academic Student Visa

The M1 visa is a type of student visa which is reserved for vocational and technical colleges/ institutes. The process for applying to the F1 visa and M-1 is similar, the difference is that on entering, the M1 visas are time-stamped and students cannot overstay their visit.

Visa Procedures, Document Checklist and Interviews

Once you have been accepted to study at any US university/college and received the Form I-20, you can schedule your student visa interview with the U.S. embassy or consulate. You'll have to apply for your student visa application online using the [US Embassy and Consulates India](#) website.

The wait time for appointment /interview may vary by location, season, and visa category, so you should apply for your visa as early as possible. The student visa for the USA can be issued up to 120 days in advance of your course of study start date.

SEVIS: All students must pay this fee. SEVIS stands for Student Exchange Visitors Information Systems (SEVIS) program and it requires schools and exchange programs to verify the enrolment status of all continuing and new foreign students or exchange visitors. The student visa cannot be issued until the student SEVIS fee has been paid. All applications applying with I-20 forms are required to provide the SEVIS I-901 fee receipt as proof of payment. You can log on to www.ice.gov/sevis/i901 for more details.

VISA TYPE	SEVIS FEE
F1	US\$ 350.00
J1	US\$ 220.00
M1	US\$ 350.00

The fee can be paid by international credit card or online NEFT / IMPS or by cash at designated Axis Bank / Citi Bank counters.

Visa Appointment and Payment of Fee:

Step 1 – Filling the online DS-160 forms

The Form DS-160 is the electronic application form for the U.S. nonimmigrant visa. It is a fully online form, which must be completed by every applicant who is applying for a student visa. The form contains questions on your personal information, contact details, passport and travel information, previous trips to the United States (if any), family information as well as questions about your education and work experience. All students will need to fill the online application DS-160 and print the copy of it with the barcode.

Step 2 – DS-160 Visa Application fee

The visa application fee is currently US\$ 160 must be paid. You can pay your nonimmigrant visa application fee in cash at any of the designated AXIS or Citibank branches. Before going to the bank, you must print and carry the applicable U.S. visa fee collection slip available after logging into your profile. Take the completed fee collection slip to the bank when you pay your fee. After receiving your payment, the bank will give you a receipt. Values are shown in (USD); however the Fee payable is in Indian Rupees (INR) at the current Consular Exchange rate.

Step 3 - Schedule Your Visa Interview

After you've submitted Form DS-160 online you can schedule your visa interview. Wait times for interviews vary from consulate to consulate or city by city.

All applicant's will be required to get a digital fingerprint (Biometric) scan completed prior to the F1 interview day. In many cases it can be completed on a separate day prior to the interview day or some times on the same day just before the interview. Interviews can be scheduled at www.ustraveldocs.com

Step 4 – Attend the Visa Interview

The most important step in the visa process is this interview. And this will be the deciding factor as to whether you will receive a U.S. student visa or not.



Before attending your interview, gather the following items and information:

- Your passport
- One copy of your visa photograph
- Your printed DS-160 confirmation page
- Your printed I-901 SEVIS fee confirmation page
- Your visa application fee payment receipt
- Form I-20 for F-1/M-1 students, or Form DS-2019 for J-1 students (make sure to bring the original form – not a copy!)

You will also require other documentation, such as:

- Official transcripts from colleges/universities you've attended
- Diplomas/degrees from high schools/colleges/universities you've attended
- Standardized test scores (TOEFL / IELTS or GRE / SAT whichever is applicable)
- Proof of sufficient funds
 - Financial and any other documents you believe will support your application and which give credible evidence that you have enough readily-available funds to meet all expenses for the first year of study and that you have access to funds sufficient to cover all expenses while you remain in the United States. M-1 applicants must demonstrate the ability to pay all tuition and living costs for the entire period of their intended stay.
 - Photocopies of bank statements will not be accepted unless you can also show original copies of bank statements or original bank books.
 - If you are financially sponsored by another person, bring proof of your relationship to the sponsor (such as your birth certificate), the sponsor's most recent original tax forms / payslips and the sponsor's bankbooks and/or fixed deposit certificates.
 - Evidence of any work experience (letter, payslips and salary statement)
- Evidence of any work experience (Appointment letter, payslips or salary statement)
- Proof of your intent to depart the U.S. at the end of your program



THE INTERVIEW:

All students will undergo personal interview with the visa officer at the U.S. Consulate, the visa officer may ask the students various questions related to their past qualification, why they want to study in USA, their future plans and goals, family background etc. to determine the students genuine intentions.

Hints for the interview:

- Be well prepared and well informed about the university, program of study, costs and sum up your educational objectives.
- Be able to justify his/her choice of studying in United States and how it will benefit in career prospects back home in India.
- Demonstrate strong economic, social and cultural ties in India.
- Be aware of sponsor's (preferably parents) income and nature of work.
- Be well acquainted with own education qualification including university / college credentials in India.
- Finally be able to demonstrate that you have sufficient funds currently available to pay first year tuition fee and living expenses and that funds will be available for additional years until the course of study is completed.

Note: The visa officers are looking for students who are honest, well prepared (no parroting), motivating, confident (not over confident), spontaneous (no parroting), clarity in communication and projecting positive body language. You must be able to justify as to "why you deserve to secure the student visa".

Working in USA while Studying

F1 student visa holders cannot work in any off-campus employment during the first year of their studies. In some circumstances the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) may grant permission to certain students for off campus employment only after one year of study. Students can however accept on-campus employment at their university.

M1 student visa holders cannot accept any employment except for the purpose of temporary practical training

J1 visa holders cannot be accepted into any employment other than which is an integral part of course or program.

The student spouses and children (dependants on F2, M2 and J2 visas) cannot work and may not accept any employment any time.

Working after Studies

Optional Practical Training (OPT):

After completing the studies student visa holders are eligible to apply for up to one year of paid experience called OPT. This visa allows them to gain work experience in their chosen career.

To be eligible for this students must be on student visa for a minimum of nine months and the OPT application must be filed at least 90 days prior to completion of their studies. Eligible students can apply to receive up to 12 months of OPT employment authorization before completing their academic studies (pre-completion) and/or after completing their academic studies (post-completion). However, all periods of pre-completion OPT will be deducted from the available period of post-completion OPT.



OPT Extension for students for 24 months:

If you have earned a degree in certain science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields, you may apply for a 24-month extension of your post-completion OPT employment authorization.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT):

This is an employment option available for students where practical training employment is considered to be an integral part of the academic program. CPT is defined to be alternative work/study, internship or any other type of required practicum that is offered by sponsoring employers through cooperative agreements with university / colleges. CPT requires that the students have a valid student visa for minimum 9 months and are in proper standing in terms of academics and GPA. The Designated School official (DSO) at university / college has to authorize this on the I-20. Please note that each university has different procedures regarding the CPT and more you can obtain more information by getting in touch with the International Student Services office at the university.

H1B Work Visa

The H1B visa is the official and primary USA work visa available to people from all around the world. This visa allows U.S. companies to employ graduate level workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise in specialized fields such as in IT, finance, accounting, architecture, engineering, mathematics, science, medicine, etc. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services sets a limit on how many H1B visas are issued each year. These numbers can change as per regulations of the U.S. One of the main advantages of the H1B visa is that it's a "dual intent" visa which means that one can apply for Green card (legal permanent residency).

The H1 B visa is typically valid from 3 to 6 years and entitles spouses and children to accompany the main applicant.



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