



COLLEGE OF MOUNT SAINT VINCENT

Guide for Obtaining the F-1 Visa

Immigration and Visa Information for F-1 Students

This information has been prepared for students who have a SEVIS Form I-20 (F-1 students) for a program of study at the College of Mount Saint Vincent. It describes the steps you need to take in order to pay the SEVIS fee, to apply for an F-1 student visa, and to enter the U.S. as a student in F-1 immigration status.

Step 1: Read your enclosed SEVIS Form I-20

Your SEVIS immigration document indicates that we have created a record for you in the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Your assigned SEVIS ID number is in the upper right corner of page 1 of your SEVIS Form. If any information on this form is incorrect, please contact Director of Admission Jackie Williams at the College of Mount Saint Vincent immediately (email: jackie.williams@mountsaintvincent.edu). If all of the information is correct, complete and sign the bottom portion of the form.

Note: The spelling of your name and your date of birth must be exactly the same as reflected in your passport. If your name and/or date of birth on SEVIS immigration document are not exactly the same as the information that appears in your passport, please request that we issue you a corrected Form I-20.

Step 2: Make Sure Your Passport is Valid

In order to avoid possible problems applying for a visa or entering the U.S., it is recommended that your passport must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date you intend to remain in the U.S.

Step 3: Pay the SEVIS Fee

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requires proof of payment of the \$200 SEVIS fee (called the SEVIS I-901 Fee) before issuing a visa or approving any benefits of status. This fee must be paid by new F-1 students with who are beginning an academic program in the US in F-1 status. While immigration regulations indicate that the fee should be paid a minimum of three business days prior to a visa application at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate, we suggest that students pay the fee as soon as they receive the Form I-20 to allow sufficient time for DHS to update the fee payment in the student's electronic SEVIS record. You must use the online form SEVIS I-901 and pay the fee. Please go to the following online site to pay this I-901 fee:

<http://fmjfee.com>

Payment

Your Payment Receipt

- After paying the I-901 fee online, you must print out a payment receipt (form I-797) at the end of your transaction.

- Make and keep extra copies of your SEVIS fee payment receipt. You should keep your receipt for your entire period in the U.S.
- Present a copy of the receipt with your visa application at the U.S. consulate and at the U.S. port of entry. Carry the receipt with you during any future travel into the U.S.

Please note that the SEVIS fee is non-refundable. However, if your visa application is denied by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you might not be required to pay a new SEVIS fee if you reapply for a new visa within 12 months of the denial

Step 4: Contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate

You will need to contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate to arrange for an interview at the Consulate. Prior to this interview appointment, you should complete the online application for the visa (see below), pay the fee, and have the other documents ready so that you can bring them to the interview.

Please refer to the following U.S. Department of State (USDOS) website for information on your nearest US Embassy: http://travel.state.gov/visa/embassy/embassy_4825.html

The visa application process is now online. To apply for a visa, you will need to use form DS-160. This application can be found at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html

Please note that after you have completed the DS-160, you need to take these next steps:

- Print and keep the DS-160 barcode page. (You will not need to print the full application.)
- Visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website where you will determine any additional country-specific instructions.
- Schedule and interview at the US Embassy or Consulate
 - Before an interview, nonimmigrant visa applicants, with few exceptions, need to pay the visa application processing fee. To learn about this fee, and how to pay this fee, visit the US Consulate Webpage and read under the Visas section about fee payment in your country.

Applying for a Student Visa

As part of the visa application process, an interview at the embassy consular section is required for visa applicants from age 14 through 79, with few exceptions. Persons age 13 and younger, and age 80 and older, generally do not require an interview, unless requested by embassy or consulate. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing time information for each U.S. Embassy or Consulate worldwide is available on our website at [Visa Wait Times](#), and on most embassy websites. Learn how to schedule an appointment for an interview, pay the application processing fee, review embassy specific instructions, and much more by visiting the [Embassy or Consulate website](#) where you will apply.

During the visa application process, usually at the interview, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken. Some visa applications require further administrative processing, which takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer. Also, because each student's personal and academic situation is different, two students applying for same visa may be asked different questions and be required to submit different additional documents.

Required Documentation

Each applicant for a student visa **must** have the forms and documentation as explained below. Bring these with you to the US Consulate Interview.

- You will need a SEVIS generated Form, I-20, which was provided to you by the College of Mount Saint Vincent. You must sign the I-20 form.
- You will need the formal letter of acceptance signed by the Dean of the School of Professional and Graduate Studies Edward Meyer from the College of Mount Saint Vincent.
- **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application, Form DS-160.** Visit the [DS-160 webpage](#) to learn more about the DS-160 online process.
- **A passport** valid for travel to the United States and with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the United States.
- **One (1) 2x2 photograph.** See the required photo format explained in [Photograph Requirements](#);
- A fee receipt to show payment of the visa application fee. For current fees for Department of State government services select [Fees](#). You will need to provide a receipt showing the visa application processing fee has been paid, when you come for your visa interview. Visit the website of your local US Consulate office to find out how to pay this fee.
- The SEVIS I-901 fee receipt, which you can pay online and print out the receipt at the end of the process online. (See explanation of the I-901 fee above).
- Financial evidence that shows you or your parents who are sponsoring you has sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period of your intended study. For example, if you or your sponsor is a salaried employee, please bring income tax documents and original bank books and/or statements. If you or your sponsor owns a business, please bring business registration, licenses, etc., and tax documents, as well as original bank books and/or statements.

The Interview

All visa applicants are now required to schedule an appointment for an interview. Please keep in mind that it may take a few weeks to schedule an appointment, so you should initiate your visa application as early as possible. Before your interview, practice answering questions in English about your visa application, your plans in the U.S., and your plans after you return home. If your spouse and children will remain in your country, be prepared to explain how they will support themselves without you sending them money from the U.S. Be positive and respond to questions with clear, concise answers during your interview.

You may not need to do anything special to prove that you intend to return home. It may be sufficient for you to explain, if asked, that you plan to return to your country to work, to continue your studies, or to do whatever you plan to do when you return home. However, you may be required to prove that you have such strong ties to your country that you will return there. If you would like more information, please refer to the Visa Process Guide on the following USDOS website: <http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors.html>

The consular official may decide to process your application through a special “security clearance” before granting the visa. Security clearances may take as long as a few months, so it is very important that you apply for your F-1 visa as early as possible. Most consular officials request a security clearance for a visa application based on the national origin of the applicant or on a determined level of sensitivity in a prospective field of study. Once the application has

been sent for security clearance, the applicant must simply wait until the consular post approves the visa.

If a visa application is denied, it is difficult to get the Consulate to change its decision. For this reason, it is important that you arrive at your appointment with the best and most complete supporting information. If your visa is denied, we suggest that you ask for the reason for the denial and request a reason in writing if possible.

Step 5: Travel to the U.S.

Once you have obtained your F-1 visa, you are ready to travel to the U.S. Immigration regulations allow you to enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days prior to the start of your program indicated on your SEVIS immigration document. You must carry with you items listed in Step 4. Place these documents in a folder or envelope that you will have with you at all times during your travel.

Step 6: Apply for “admission” to the U.S.

When you arrive in the U.S., you will apply for “admission” and an Immigration Inspector will examine your documents. You will need to present the following documents:

- Passport with valid F-1 visa
- SEVIS Form I-20
- Proof of SEVIS fee payment

You will need to have the following documents ready to present, should the Inspector ask for them:

- Admission letter from the College of Mount Saint Vincent
- Original financial documents

The Immigration Inspector may ask you one or more questions. If you are asked about the funds that will pay for your studies, answer the question and offer to show the Inspector your financial documents

Please be advised that citizens of certain countries may be subject to Special Registration procedures when entering the U.S. This process requires fingerprinting and photographing and could take extra time, please plan connecting flights accordingly. You should calmly provide all information requested by the immigration officer.

If you have the required documents and there are no more questions, the Inspector will “admit” you to the U.S. by processing your passport and your SEVIS Form I-20. When you leave the inspection area, make certain you have the following documents in your possession:

1. Passport,
2. *Departure Record*
3. SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019
4. All financial documents