

Applying for an F-1 or J-1 Visa Outside the U.S.

Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019)

Your Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019) needed to obtain your F-1 or J-1 visa. If your name on this Certificate is not exactly as it appears in your passport, do NOT use this Certificate to apply for a visa—instead, return it to the appropriate admissions office at Rutgers and request an amended Certificate be sent to you before you apply for your visa.

Your Name Must Be the Same on All Legal Documents

The easiest way to limit certain bureaucratic problems in the U.S. is to ensure that ALL of your legal documents list your name exactly the same way as it is listed in your passport. To avoid unnecessary administrative difficulties, the spelling of your name should be exactly the same on your passport, your Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019), and your U.S. nonimmigrant visa stamp.

Form I-901 for Payment of the U.S. Government's SEVIS Fee

Enclosed with your I-20 or DS-2019 form you will find instructions on how to pay the Department of Homeland Security's SEVIS fee, a mandatory fee for all F-1 and J-1 visa applicants who are beginning a new academic or research program. You must obtain and present proof of having paid the fee in order to apply for a visa and in order to enter the U.S. (For Canadian citizens, proof of SEVIS fee payment must be presented upon entry to the U.S.) If you choose to pay online, **be sure to print out the online "confirmation" receipt** at the time it appears on your computer screen, as this will be the *only* chance you will have to access the confirmation receipt! Once you leave that screen, you will not be able to access it again. Regardless of whether you pay online or by another method, be certain to make several copies of the payment confirmation receipt for your records.

Visa Application Forms and Personal Interview

(Note: Canadian citizens are NOT required to have a U.S. visa.) The basic U.S. visa application is Form DS-156; some F-1 and J-1 visa applicants may be required to complete additional forms (DS-157 and/or DS-158). Although forms are available at every U.S. consulate, you may choose to access them online and print them out to take with you to the consulate. To do this, go to:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi_forms.html

There is generally an application fee for a U.S. visa. For information on fees that may apply to you, go to the website of the U.S. consulate at which you'll apply for your visa. All U.S. consulate websites are accessible by link from:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/abroad_embassies.html

Most F-1 and J-1 visa applicants will be required to have a personal interview at the U.S. consulate. Waiting times for these interviews vary, depending on the specific consulate and time of year. For details on average visa waiting times at U.S. consulates throughout the world, go to the following website:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_wait.php

For additional visa information and instructions on how to apply for a visa, go to:

<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/visapolicy/index.html>

Additional Documents Needed for the Visa Application

Check with the website of the U.S. consulate at which you will apply for a visa prior to submitting your application to ensure that you have all necessary documents. Go to:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/abroad_embassies.html

Even if not listed on the website, you should also plan to present the following:

F-1 and J-1 Students:

- ◆ Letter of admission from Rutgers
- ◆ Proof of funding as listed on Form I-20 or DS-2019 (not needed if admission letter notes full funding from Rutgers)
- ◆ If entering a doctoral program in the sciences or a technological field, a letter from your department at Rutgers that briefly explains the scope and breadth of the work you will be engaged in at Rutgers (to assist the visa officer in assessing if you are in a field the U.S. government considers “technology-sensitive”).
- ◆ If available, documentation indicating your intent to return home at the end of your studies

J-1 Professors and Scholars:

- ◆ Letter of appointment or invitation from Rutgers
- ◆ Proof of funding, if not noted on letter of appointment
- ◆ If available, documentation indicating your intent to return home at the end of your J-1 program
- ◆ A letter from your department at Rutgers that briefly explains the scope and breadth of the work you will be engaged in at Rutgers (to assist the visa officer in assessing if you are in a field the U.S. government considers “technology-sensitive”).

Special Advisories (“Do’s and Don’ts”) for F-1 and J-1 Visa Applicants

DO NOT enter the United States with a Certificate of Eligibility from a school other than the one you will attend! If you have already obtained a visa with one school’s name listed on it and you now wish to change your plans, contact the U.S. consulate where you obtained your original visa to ask for a new visa. If you are a **student**, it will not be possible to transfer to another U.S. school until you have completed the mandatory **in-person** “check in” procedure at the Center for International Services, have provided a local U.S. address as required by SEVIS regulations, and have offered a reasonable explanation as to why you entered on a Rutgers visa document if you intend to study at another school. If you are a J-1 **professor or scholar**, you may transfer to another institution after a reasonable length’s stay at the initial institution.

DO NOT enter the United States on a visa other than F-1 or J-1 if you intend to study, teach or conduct research at Rutgers upon arrival. Individuals who enter the U.S. on a B-1/B-2 visa may **not** apply to the DHS for a change to F-1 or J-1 status unless they meet two conditions: (1) their B-1/B-2 visa stamp in their passport and the back of their I-94 form (given at the U.S. port of entry) both bear the notation “Prospective Student” (F-1) or “Prospective Exchange Visitor” (J-1); and (2) they do not intend to engage in F-1 or J-1 activities until the change of status is actually approved by the DHS. Individuals in B-1/B-2 or F-2 status are NOT permitted to engage in study or employment in the U.S. Please also note that the DHS will not approve a change of status from B-2 to F-1 or J-1 without the two notations mentioned above, and that such approvals normally take 3-4 months.

DO NOT attempt to enter the U.S. as an F-1 or J-1 visitor more than 30 days prior to the starting date of your I-20 or DS-2019! Although you may apply for an **F-1 visa** up to 120 days prior to the I-20 start date and you may apply for a **J-1 visa** at any time after receiving the DS-2019, neither F-1 NOR J-1 visa holders are permitted to enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start date on their I-20 or DS-2019.

DO “check in” at The Center for International Faculty and Student Services no more than 30 days after the start date on your I-20 or DS-2019—earlier than that is even better. Your legal status in the U.S. will depend upon your completion of this mandatory “check in” at CIFSS within the first 30-day period of your Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019)! **If you will not be able to complete this check-in before the 30-day deadline, you MUST notify CIFSS in advance to protect your future entry and legal status.**