

## F-1 Visa

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This visa is for serious students qualified to attend full-studies at colleges, universities, conservatories, academic high schools (subject to strict regulations) and institutions with language-training programs in the United States.

### A. "Am I Qualified?" -- Basic Requirements:

- The foreign student must have completed the course of study required of all students entering the program;
- The student must be proficient in English (with the following exceptions):
- The student is coming to the U.S. to participate in an English-training program;
- The school has made special arrangements to teach the student English or to teach courses in the foreign student's language;
- The student must prove that identifiable funds are available to pay all expenses incurred while studying in the U.S.;
- The student must be accepted for a full course of study by a school specifically approved by the INS; and
- The school must provide the student with a Form I-20 A-B.

### B. "Okay, I Think I Am Qualified, Now What?" -- Applying for the F-1:

- The student should apply at the Consulate or Embassy located in their place of permanent residence;
- Required Documentation (to be brought along when you go for the visa):
- Non-refundable \$45 application fee (subject to change);
- Form OF-156, completed and signed (available at the Consulate/Embassy);
- Passport valid for at least six months beyond end of intended stay;
- One photograph 1 « inches square;
- Form I-20 A-B (from school);
- Evidence of sufficient funds;
- Evidence of ties to a residence in a foreign country; and
- A statement/promise that the student will depart the U.S. when they have completed their studies.

### C. "Can I Bring My Family With Me?" -- Visas For Your Dependents

- Dependents are defined as only:
- Spouse; and
- Unmarried, minor children (under 21 years old);
- Dependents may apply for a visa to accompany the student;
- Dependents must meet all visa eligibility requirements, including:
- Evidence of sufficient funds for their support; and
- Evidence that they will depart when the student's education is completed.
- Dependents may not work while in the United States.

### D. "Can I Work While In the U.S. ?" -- Employment While in F-1 Status

- The student may not work off-campus at anytime during the first year;
- The INS may allow off-campus employment after the first year; and
- The student may work on-campus without INS permission, however, all questions or concerns regarding this should be directed to your school before beginning employment of any kind;
- To apply for either off-campus employment or optional practical training, the student must submit Form I-201D which is provided by the school and Form I-765.

### E. "What Else Should I Know?" - Special Considerations

- The Form I-94, issued at the port of entry into the U.S., dictates the length of permitted stay which must be adhered to;
- Form OF-156 lists persons ineligible to receive visas, however, in some cases, an ineligible person who is a student may apply for a waiver of ineligibility and receive a visa upon approval of the waiver; and
- A student who wishes to use an F-1 visa to attend public high school must:
- Submit evidence that the school district has been reimbursed, in advance, for the cost of the education; and
- Not attend the school for more than 12 months.

### F. "Optional Practical Training -- What's the Story?"

- OPT can be taken either while in school (curricular) or after graduation;
- Curricular OPT can only be taken by F-1 students and is coordinated with your school - not the INS;
- A student may spend a total of one year in OPT (curricular and post-graduate periods spent in OPT should be added together for these purposes);
- Speak to your school for further information on OPT.

### G. "How Do I get Out of Here? -- Transferring to a New School

- To transfer, you must:
- Be maintaining status; and
- Go through the following notification procedure:
- Notify your current school of the intent to transfer;
- Obtain Form I-20A-B from the new school;
- Complete and return the Form I-20A-B to the school within 15 days of starting classes.

#### H. "I Need An Extension, What Do I Do?" -- Extension Procedure

- The initial period of admission on the I-94 allows for: the completion of the academic program, any authorized practical training and sixty days grace period to leave the United States.
- An extension may be obtained if:
- The student has maintained status;
- Delay in completion is due to:
- Compelling academic reasons or
- Compelling medical reasons.
- To apply, the student must:
- Submit completed form I-20A-B to their school;
- Submit an I-538 to their school; and
- Do this within 30 days before the date noted on the original I-20A-B.
- The student does not need to notify the INS.
- The Department of State does not renew or issue F-1 visas in the United States.

#### I. "Tell Me More!" - Further Information

- Where do I get the Form I-20 A-B?
- Contact your school and they will contact the INS, if necessary.
- Who do I ask about specific application procedures for my country?
- The Consular office in your country.