Obtaining an F-1 Student Visa

Helpful information can be found about the process and rules for studying in the United States as an international student at the Department of Homeland Security’s Study in the States website.

Passport: If you don’t have a passport, obtain one now from your government. Your expiration date on your passport must be at least 6 months in the future when you enter the United States.

I-20: Review all information on your I-20. Your name and date of birth should be exactly the same as it is on your passport. If any of the information on your I-20 is incorrect, please contact the International Students and Scholars Office at Clark University immediately. An amended I-20 will be issued if necessary. Sign the I-20 at the bottom of page 1 where indicated. If you are bringing dependents with you, they will need an I-20 as well.*

SEVIS: Pay the SEVIS fee so that you are eligible to apply for an F-1 Student visa. You can pay the SEVIS fee here.

US Consulate: Contact the nearest U.S. Consulate to determine the procedures for visa application. Procedures and processing times can vary depending which U.S. Consulate serves your area. Citizens from Canada and Bermuda may not need a visa.** Special procedures are in place for citizens of North Korea, Libya, Syria, Iran, Yemen and Libya.

• Make sure that you complete the DS-160 Form.
• Information on cost and what documents are needed to complete the DS-160 Form can be found here.

Visa Interview: You will need to bring the following documents to your visa interview:

- Passport
- Photo
- Form DS 160
- Form I-20
- Proof of SEVIS fee payment
- Clark U. Admission letter
- Original documents proving availability of funds needed as reflected on I-20
- Documents that demonstrate that you intend to return home after completion of studies.

Proof: Here’s what you must prove at your visa interview:

1. That you are eligible for F-1 student status. In addition to showing the U.S. Consul Officer your I-20 and letter of admission, you should be prepared to answer questions such as “Why do you want to pursue this field of study?” Or “Why did you choose Clark University?” Your application will be denied if the consul officer suspects that you have accepted Clark University’s offer of admission, but don’t intend to be a student.

2. That you can meet all your financial obligations while in the U.S. It’s imperative that you have the funds to cover your first year of tuition, fees and living expenses. However, consul officers must be assured that you will not run out of funding at any point during your program of study.
Make sure to have all financial aid/scholarship letters, bank statements or affidavits of support for the consul officers to inspect.

3. **That you will return to your home country after your studies.** The best way is to be prepared to explain in detail your plans and employment prospects in your home country for after completion of your academic program.

Things to remember:

a. Consul officers have absolute authority to grant or deny visas and their decisions cannot be overturned. If denied, you can re-apply for the visa if you can provide additional supporting documents.

b. Many visas are denied due to “immigrant intent.” If you have relatives living in the U.S., the consul officer may believe that your intention is to remain permanently in the U.S.

c. Your visa may be denied if you appear to be unclear about your academic goals or about how you will put what you will learn to work in your home country.

d. Biometrics will be collected when you apply for a U.S. visa.

*Dependents* – If you have informed us that you have a spouse or children who will stay in the US with you, an I-20 will be included in your packet for each of them. Make sure the information on the I-20 for each dependent is correct. Sign each I-20 where indicated.

**Citizens of Bermuda and Canada** – You will be issued an I-20 and must pay a SEVIS fee. Obtaining an F-1 visa is optional for these students

**Entering the United States**

Federal regulations allow you to enter the U.S. no more than 30 days prior to the start of your program indicated on your Form I-20. Make sure that you carry all the documents listed as required for your visa interview with you when you travel. Do not pack them in your checked baggage. You will need to show these documents to the U.S. officer at the U.S. point of entry. Answer all questions posed by the officer calmly. When the officer is confident that you are admissible, your passport will be stamped to indicate “F-1, D/S”. Make sure you have all of your documents before you leave the inspection area.

Make sure that you bring your visa, passport and I-94 information to the International Students and Scholars Office within the first week of classes. The ISSO is located on the Clark University campus on the second floor of Corner House (at the corner of Woodland and Charlotte streets). Our hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Contact us at 508-793-3732 or pdoherty@clarku.edu or vgenkos@clarku.edu.