

STUDENT VISA & ENTRY TO THE U.S.

WE STRONGLY DISCOURAGE students from making travel plans or purchasing a non-refundable ticket before being granted a visa. Due to the unprecedented challenges and uncertainty due to COVID-19, please regularly check your personal and Haverford College email addresses for updates regarding the Fall semester.

The United States of America (USA) welcomes students and exchange visitors from abroad. Citizens of other countries must, more than likely, first obtain a visa either for temporary stay, or an immigrant visa for permanent residence. A foreign student who desires to study in the U.S. and who has applied and been accepted to a SEVIS-Approved school is required to secure a student visa. (Note that Haverford College is a SEVP certified school.) While it is the consulate or embassy abroad that decides on the visa category, the visa may be classified as an F-1. When in doubt about inadmissibility or visa classification to the U.S.A, it is advisable to consult legal counsel or check with the consulate or embassy in your home country.

Terms and Abbreviations Seen Throughout This Document

- **SEVP** = Student and Exchange Visitor Program
- **SEVIS** = Student and Exchange Visitor Identification System
- **I-20 Form** = Certificate of Eligibility of Nonimmigrant Student Status
- **F-1 Visa** = Classification for visa needed for
- **I-901 SEVIS Fee** = Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, & M Non-immigrants
- **DS-160** = Online visa application form
- **U.S. Embassy or Consulate/ Consular Officer** = US Government official stationed in your home country who is responsible for reviewing visa applications and issuing (or denying) visas for entry into the United States
- **CBP** = U.S. Custom and Border Protection
- **DSO** = Designated School Official (for Haverford College)
- **ISSO** = International Student Services Office (within Haverford College)
- **Form I-901** = SEVIS Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, & M Non-immigrants
- **DHS** = U.S. Department of Homeland Security
- **DOS** = Department of State

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<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html>

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The I-20 Form

- The I-20 form shows the student's SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Identification System) identification number, which starts with the letter N and is followed by nine digits. It can be found on the left-hand side of the document.
- An I-20 form is only issued to a student after they demonstrate to the ISSO at Haverford that they have sufficient funds available to pay for all educational, living, and travel costs.
- The I-20 Form will only be sent to the admitted student. If the student is under the age of 18, the I-20 form can be mailed to the legal parent or guardian listed on the Data In-Take Form submitted to ISSO. Students under the age of 18 should confirm to the DSO whether they would like their I-20 to be sent to themselves or their parent(s)/legal guardian(s).
 - *Admitted students should provide their address or NOT the address of any recruiters, agents, or representatives. According to the US Department of Homeland Security, "A recruiter has no proper role in handling your Form I-20. A recruiter does not issue a Form I-20, nor should the recruiter hold onto your Form I-20 for any reason..."*
<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/what-is-a-commission-based-recruiter>
- A student will accumulate several versions of the I-20 form during their time studying in the United States. It is necessary to keep all previous I-20 forms received. These will be required for future applications so each student should maintain all copies as part of their immigration records.
- If you have dependents coming with you to the U.S - please let ISSO know at the same time you requested an I-20.

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SEVIS (I-901) Fee

Regulations require all prospective F and M Visa carrying students to pay the I-901 [SEVIS](#) Fee before the US Department of State issues a visa. The SEVIS I-901 fee is different from the visa application fee. To pay the [I-901 SEVIS Fee](#), visit [FMJfee.com](#).

- Once you have received the Form I-20, you will need to pay the SEVIS fee by credit card, Western Union, check or money order. This can be done via (<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/>) and a receipt of payment can be printed. You are required to show the receipt at the time of your visa interview.
 - There are two types of records for fee payments: electronic and paper. The electronic records are kept in three systems: SEVIS I-901 fee Payment System, SEVIS, and the DOS consular database.
 - A paper receipt offers you the best assurance that an electronic record of your payment exists. We recommend bringing a paper receipt to your interview. Consular officers should be able to verify your payment information if it is in the SEVIS or DOS databases. You will also require the paper receipt to show the CBP officer at the immigration inspection at your point of entry into the United States.
- Non-immigrants currently in the United States who apply for student or exchange visitor status must pay the fee before filing their Change of Status (COS) application. If you are required to pay the fee, you need to do so **before** your visa interview or filing an application for **reinstatement, change of status**, etc.
- The fee can be paid by the student or someone else, inside or outside of the U.S. Contact the American Embassy or Consulate in your country for an appointment and specific application procedures.
 - Information on U.S. Embassies can be located at <https://www.usembassy.gov/>
- If your country of citizenship or country of birth is **Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, or Gambia**, you will not be able to pay the fee by credit card. You must pay by money order, Western Union, Quick Pay, or certified check drawn on a U.S. financial institution.

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Steps for Paying Online

- The most important information for the online system is your SEVIS ID Number and School Code. The SEVIS ID number can be found on the I-20 Form on top of page 1, which begins with the letter “N.” **Haverford College’s code is PHI (upper case “I” and not the number 1) 214F00246000.** The campus number must be accurately inputted.
- If you file your Form I-901 online and pay with a [credit or debit card](#), you can print a receipt immediately.
 - Locate Form I-901 at www.fmjfee.com Complete the Online-Form; type your name as it appears in your passport, which should be the same on Form I-20
 - Provide a method of payment (Credit Card, Western Union)
 - Payment via Money Order/Check. Follow the on-instructions for mailing
 - Debit cards (also known as check cards) should have the Visa or MasterCard logo
 - Print a copy of the online receipt
 - Make copies of the receipt and keep it with your other immigration documents
 - Those who might not have access to the internet should follow the instructions for mailing the I-901 Fee.
- Applicants who need a visa to enter the United States should pay the SEVIS fee at least three (3) business days before going to the U.S. embassy or consulate for their visa interview.
- Applicants who are citizens of **Canada, Bermuda, or residents of other islands** described in 8CFR 212.1a wishing to apply for F-1 or J-1 status should pay the SEVIS fee at least 3 (three) business days before entering the United States Port of Entry.

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Applying for a Visa

Qualifications for an F-1 VISA

The Immigration and National Act requires applicants to meet the following criteria:

1. Having a residence abroad;
2. Having no intention of abandoning that residence;
3. Depart the U.S. after completing your course of study;
4. Having the funds necessary to undertake your studies while in the U.S.

A new applicant may apply for a visa up to 120 days in advance of their course of study start date. **Students will not be allowed to enter the U.S in F-1 status earlier than 30 days before the start day of classes recorded on the I-20 form. Your Initial I-20 will note your earliest admission date to the United States in the Program of Study section.**

New students should take the letter from their school's Designated School Official (DSO) to their visa interview. The letter will provide the particulars for the orientation including the date, which is **Saturday, August 22, 2020.**

- ***Earliest Arrival Date-*** A new student cannot arrive in the United States earlier than 30 days before the start of classes. ***** Students considering arriving early in the United States should be aware that they will not be permitted to arrive on campus early. ISSO will provide instructions and the earliest date you can move into campus when this date has been confirmed.**
- ***Visa Application Fee-*** Currently, the visa application fee is USD\$160.00, which could change, so check to see the cost before applying.
- ***Visa Appointment Wait Time-*** The wait time depends on where you live, season, and visa category. Allow ample time to apply for your visa; peak months (May to August) are a popular time at U.S. Embassies and Consulates. If you apply earlier than 120 days, the embassy and consulates will hold your application until it is time to grant you a visa. The issuance of a student visa normally takes 120 days or less. Due to COVID-19 global pandemic and the closures of embassies for a significant period of time, delays and backlogs can be expected.
- ***Visa Issuance Fee-*** If applicable, it is possible that if a visa is issued, there will be an additional visa issuance fee (reciprocity fee). Check to see if you are required to pay such fee at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/fees/fees-reciprocity-tables.html>

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Visa Waiver Program

Students cannot travel on the Visa Waiver Program. Citizens of Visa Waiver Program (VWP) participating countries who intend to study in the States cannot travel on the VWP or visitor (B) visas, except to undertake recreational study as part of a tourist visit. Students must travel to the United States with student (F-1 or M-1) visas. For more information on the VWP, see [Visa Waiver Program](#).

For short periods of recreational study, a Visitor (B) visa can be used. Enrollment in a short recreational course of study, which is not for credit toward a degree or academic certificate, is permitted on a visitor (B) visa. Learn more about [Visitor Visas](#).

Study leading to a U.S. conferred degree or certificate is not permitted on a visitor (B) visa, even if it is for a short duration. For example, distance learning which requires a period of time on the institution's U.S. campus requires an F-1 visa.

HOW TO APPLY. There are several steps to apply for a visa. The order of these steps and how you complete them may vary at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate where you apply. Please consult the instructions available on the [embassy or consulate website](#) where you intend to apply.

Visitor Visas

A new student who wants an earlier entry into the U.S. (more than 30 days before the course start date), must qualify for, and obtain a visitor visa.

- A “prospective student” notation will be shown on the visitor visa and the traveler will need to make the intent to study clear to the U.S. immigration inspector at the port of entry.
- Before beginning any studies, they must obtain approval for a change to Exchange Visitor status, filing **Form I-539**, Application for Change of Nonimmigrant Status, and pay the fee.
- Also, the student must submit the required Form I-20 to the Department of Homeland Security office where the application is made.
- **PLEASE BE AWARE THAT THE PROSPECTIVE (NEW) STUDENT CANNOT BEGIN STUDIES UNTIL THE CHANGE OF STATUS IS APPROVED. FOR THIS REASON, ENTERING ON A “B” VISA IS NOT RECOMMENDED. IF YOU CANNOT STUDY, YOU CANNOT LIVE ON HAVERFORD’S CAMPUS.**

For further information regarding the Change of Nonimmigrant Status, visit the

<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=94d12c1a6855d010VgnVCM10000048f3d6a1RCRD&vgnnextchannel=db029c7755cb9010VgnVCM1000045f3d6a1RCRD>

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Preparing for a Visa Interview in the U.S. Embassy or Consulate

Upon receipt of the I-20 Form with the signature of the Designated School Official (DSO), **sign the form** if you are eighteen years (18) or older and schedule an appointment with the embassy or consulate.

- A parent or guardian must sign **ONLY IF** the student is under 18 years of age. Parents should not sign the I-20 if the student is 18 years of age or older regardless of what age is considered to be an adult in your home country.
- Consult with the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate to see if an appointment is necessary or if you can report for an interview without having an appointment. Each embassy might differ in what is needed or not needed. Take the time to check for all the

What to Expect During the Visa Interview

- Ink-free digital finger scan (biometrics)
- Possible additional scan screening
- Answering questions in a very short interview
- Demonstrate that you intend to return to your home country upon completion of your program of study through family ties, use of education in your home country, employment, or assets (house, land, apartment, etc.).

Checklist of Documents to Bring to Visa Interview

1. Your acceptance letter from Haverford College
2. DSO Letter with orientation confirmation dates
3. I-20 Form
4. Financial evidence that shows you or your parents, who are sponsoring you, have enough funds to cover your educational, travel, and living expenses during the period of your intended study. Proof of Financial Support documents such as Bank Statements and/or Affidavit of Support (amounts should match your I-Form or exceed it).
5. A completed DS-160 Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant application form and fee, (<http://evisaforms.state.gov/>)

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6. A passport valid for travel to the United States and with validity dates at least six (6) months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the United States unless [country-specific agreements](#) provide exemptions).
7. Proof of English Skills (Scores from standardized tests required by the educational institution such as the TOEFL, SAT, etc.)
8. The SEVIS I-901 Fee Receipt
9. Visa Application Fee Receipt
10. One (1) photograph of yourself - For detailed guidelines, see <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html>.
11. Evidence of your educational qualifications – this can include original copies of your transcript(s) and test scores.
12. Proof of ties to your home country.

Visa Denial

Even if you provided all the required documents, it is still possible that your visa application is denied. If this happens, notify the Office of International Student Support(hc-isso@haverford.edu) at Haverford College immediately.

- A denial of a visa to travel can be disappointing. To fully understand the reason for a denial, we suggest that you read the information about visa denials provided by the U.S. Bureau of Consular Affairs:
 - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/visa-denials.html>
 - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/waivers.html>.
- Students may defer their admissions for a year; however, they must put their request in writing and send it to the Admission Office at Haverford College immediately as there could be students on our waiting list that could be admitted for the current class.

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Traveling to the US

IMPORTANT NOTE: keep these items with you as you travel. *Do not place them in your checked luggage.*

1. A valid (at least 6 months) passport
2. SEVIS I-20 Form
3. Evidence of Financial Certification (your financial documentation)
4. Receipt for SEVIS fee paid
5. Evidence of a COVID Test or having recovered from COVID**
6. Name and contact for DSO--
Natasha Weisz, DSO, 610-896-1230
Haverford College Campus Safety, 24-hour Emergency Contact Number, 610-896-1111

**The CDC have issued an order mandating that all passengers (including US citizens and LPR) on international flights must have evidence of a COVID test (must be a viral test NAAT or antigen) administered no more than 3 days before their flight's departure or evidence of having recovered from COVID, even if they have been received a COVID vaccination. If a traveler does not have the appropriate documentation, they will not be allowed to board their flight. This order went into effect on January 26, 2021.

General Information about the mandate can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-air-travel.html>

I strongly recommend that you read this FAQ section on the testing mandate:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/testing-international-air-travelers.html>

Arriving in the U.S. Port of Entry

A Customs Border Patrol Officer (CBPO) will ask you to fill out the CF-6059B, Custom Declaration Form (<https://www.cbp.gov/travel/clearing-cbp/traveler-entry-form>).

Disembarking/Inspection:

- Proceed to the terminal area

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- Get into the queue (line) for non-U.S. citizens (U.S. citizens should go to the designated line)
- Have all your documents ready
- You will be asked your reason for wishing to come to the U.S. Inform the CBPO that you will be a student.
- Be prepared to give the name and address of Haverford College and the program (General Studies: Liberal Arts Curriculum).

The CBPO will verify information by:

- Utilizing SEVIS
- Contacting Haverford College's DSO
- **A secondary inspection is NOT unusual** if the CBPO cannot immediately verify all your information and does not have all your required documents, and more research is needed.

If CBPO is satisfied based on the rules set in place

- The CBPO will stamp your passport upon admission and should annotate the admission stamp to indicate the status of admission and expiration of authorized stay.
- Foreign nationals should be certain to carefully review their passport stamp to ensure that a stamp is provided and that the proper annotation is entered for status (F-1) and expiration date (D/S).

Inadmissibility/Denial of Entry

The Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers have the authority to permit or deny admission to the U.S. A visa allows you to travel to the U.S. Port of Entry (POE); however, it does not guarantee you entry into the country. Everyone arriving at the POE is subject to inspection. The officers will focus on codes and regulations on immigration and customs and agriculture.

- **If you are determined to be inadmissible you could, in certain circumstances, be placed into removal proceedings. In some circumstances, an officer may, in his or her sole discretion, determine to permit you to withdraw your application for admission. A determination of inadmissibility may have an impact on your future admissibility and may result in the cancellation of your visa if you have one.**

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- It is possible that you could be refused entry into the U.S. if you arrive more than 30 days before the date that is recorded on your SEVIS I-20 Form.
 - The I-20 Form is prepared online using a SEVIS program, so the time frame (possible dates you can arrive in the U.S.) is **already** registered with the Department of Homeland Security. Do not attempt to change the date on the I-20 Form.
- If your **Entry-Exit Paperwork is incomplete**, you could be denied entry into the US and held until a return flight to your country is available.
- Customs and Border Protection might grant you temporary admission by giving you Form I-515A (Notice of Student or Exchange Visitor). If you are admitted using this form, notify a Haverford DSO immediately upon arrival at Haverford.
- Please review the list of reasons for inadmissibility found in [INA § 212\(a\)](#).

Health-related grounds for inadmissibility. In a frequently asked question and answer section on the CPB webpage, states the following:

Q: What procedures apply in considering the health-related grounds of inadmissibility?

A: Under INA § 212(a)(1)(A), aliens seeking to travel into the United States who have certain health-related issues may be inadmissible. Should it be necessary, a physical and/or mental examination of an applicant for admission should be conducted by a panel physician. When CBP officers encounter an alien at a port of entry who may be inadmissible under public health grounds, the CBP officer may refer the alien to a panel physician. In those circumstances, the CBP officer will provide the alien with the list of panel physicians. In that case, the alien will have to go to one of the panel physicians for an evaluation before again presenting themselves for admission. The panel physician will notify CBP of the results of the examination so that CBP can make an admissibility determination.

The panel physician evaluation is valid for only one year. Thus, even if you have previously had such an evaluation, if it has been more than a year since the examination was conducted, a new examination will likely be necessary.

Upon arrival (at an international airport, seaport or land border crossing), you will be enrolled in the [US-VISIT](http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/usv.shtm) <http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/usv.shtm> entry-exit program. Some travelers will also need to register their entry into and their departure from the U.S. with the Special Registration Program. See the website at <http://www.dhs.gov/files/programs/usv.shtm> for information. If you are allowed to enter the U.S., the Customs Border Protection official will determine the length of your visit.

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The immigration inspector reviews your document; you will receive a U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) admission stamp. The stamp will be placed in your passport or travel document and notes the date of admission, class of admission, and admitted until date. (In rare cases, the CBP admission stamp is substituted with a physical I-94 card even though the process is now electronic. This should be kept throughout your time in the United States, and surrendered before exiting.) Be sure to review your stamp before leaving the inspection area to ensure that it has all the notations “F-1 D/S” written on it. All international students, including Canadian students, must have a correctly annotated I-94 to confirm their current F-1 status. If your I-94 does not have “F-1” D/S, you are considered to be in Visitor (B-2) status, a status that does not permit study in the U.S.

You can retrieve your I-94 documentation electronically via this website:
<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>

Requirements for Items Brought into the U.S.

- Students should take the time to review important information regarding Admissions/Entry requirements as well as **restrictions such as food**, (https://help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/3619/~/travelers-bringing-food-into-the-u.s.-for-personal-use agricultural products or other restricted/prohibited goods <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/us-citizens/know-before-you-go/prohibited-and-restricted-items>).
- **Large amounts of currency and gifts must be declared.** More than \$10,000 should be reported to the CBP. It will be necessary for you to fill out the Currency Reporting Form (FinCen105). More information can be found at https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/currency_reporting.pdf.
- **Do not bring alcohol.** The legal age of drinking in the U.S. is 21. (Note that the legal smoking age in the United States is 18 except for Alabama, Alaska, New Jersey, Utah and Nassau, Suffolk, and Onondaga Counties in New York where the legal age is 19).
- **Medication-** medication prescribed by a doctor should be in the dispensary bottle in which it was originally provided. Do not attempt to bring any illegal substances because your luggage will be searched. Read the information on the United States Food and Drug Administration’s website, which contains directives on bringing medication to the U.S.
<https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm484154.htm>.

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- **Support Animals-** Before attempting to bring a support animal to Haverford's campus or the U.S., please review the protocols below:
 - <https://www.haverford.edu/access-and-disability-services>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/importation/bringing-an-animal-into-the-united-states/dogs.html>

ESOURCES

Visa Application Fees: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/fees/fees-visa-services.html>

Payment Tutorial: <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901>

Introduction to the I-901 Fee SEVIS Fee, Chapter 1 thru Chapter 6. https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/I-901_SEVIS_Fee_Payment_Tutorial_Script.pdf

I-901 SEVIS Fee Customer Service hotline: 703-603-3400

Pay I-901 Fee & Check I-901 Status: <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html#>
E-mail address: fmjfee.SEVIS@ice.dhs.gov

International Student Life Cycle (F-1...)

https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/SEVP_International%20Student%20Life%20cycle_Oct%202015.pdf

B-1/B-2 Visitors Who Want to Enroll in School:

<https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2017/05/b-1b-2-visitors-who-want-to-enroll-in-school>

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