



UNDERSTANDING YOUR F-1 DOCUMENTS

Passport

A passport is an official document issued by a government, certifying the holder's identity and citizenship and entitling them to travel under its protection to and from foreign countries. You should keep your passports valid for at least 6 months into the future while studying in the United States. If you lost your passport or your passport is expiring soon, contact your home country's embassy in the United States for information about applying or renewing a passport.

Click to see a list of Foreign Consular Offices in the United States. (new link to come)

Form I-20

The **Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)** is an electronic database for providing student information to the U.S. Government on all F-1 students and their dependents. It is also a system for tracking a student's immigration history.

Schools are required to use SEVIS for the following purposes:

- **Issuing I-20 forms to students:** An I-20 is an official U.S. government form. The I-20 acts as proof of acceptance and contains the information that is needed to pay the SEVIS fee; apply for a visa or change of status, and admission into the United States
- **Maintaining up-to-date records on the status of each student:** CF reports F-1 students' full-time enrollment to SEVP by registering F-1 students in SEVIS every semester. If an F-1 student did not maintain status, CF will terminate his/her SEVIS record and he or she will be out of status.

You must have a current, valid I-20 from the school that you are attending. If you are traveling outside the United States, you must obtain a signature on the 2nd page of the I-20 from CF in order to return to the United States as an F-1 student. You can request a replacement I-20 from CF if your I-20 is lost or damaged.

Old Version

New Version

F-1 Visa

A citizen of a foreign country who wishes to study in the United States must first obtain a F-1 Student visa. F-1 visas are issued by U.S. Embassies and Consulates outside the United States.

Helpful Links:

- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE): [**Student Process Steps: How to Navigate the U.S. Immigration System**](#)
- List of U.S. Embassies, Consulates, and Diplomatic Missions at <http://usembassy.state.gov/>
- Education U.S.A.: [**Prepare for the Student Visa**](#)
- [**How to complete an F1 visa application form \(DS160\)**](#) (YouTube Video)
- [**Visa Wait Times - for Interview Appointments and Processing**](#)
- [**Check visa application status**](#)

An F-1 visa is required for F-1 students to enter the United States.

The expiration date shown on your F-1 visa does not reflect how long you are authorized to stay within the United States. You can stay in the United States on an expired F-1 visa as long as you maintain your student status. However, if you are returning home or traveling to a country where [automatic re-validation](#) does not apply, you must have a valid visa to return to the United States.

Form I-94

I-94 is the DHS Arrival-Departure Record issued to non-immigrants who are admitted to the United States, who are adjusting status while in the United States, or extending their stay, among other things. An immigration inspector from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) will scan a student's passport, generating an electronic arrival record with data elements found on the current paper I-94. CBP will make the electronic I-94 available at www.cbp.gov/I94. F1 students may visit this website to print their electronic I-94 number before applying for other certain benefits, such as a driver's license or Social Security Number.

In addition, CBP will provide each student with an admission stamp that is annotated with date of entry, class of entry (F-1) and admitted until date (D/S for F-1 students) in the passport.

Duration of Status (D/S) is defined as:

- The time during which you are pursuing a full course of study (12 units for undergraduates/ 8 units for graduates per semester) and making normal progress toward completing that course
- The time you may be working in authorized "practical training" after you complete studies (if you qualify and are so authorized)
- 60 days to depart the country. If you terminate your course of study before you complete all degree program requirements, you must notify CF. At that time you will only have a 15-day grace period. Students who fail to notify CF before terminating their studies prior to the completion of their program of study do not have a grace period

Those who haven't traveled overseas after April 26, 2013 may still have an I-94 card (a little white card stapled in the passport). If you lost an I-94 card, you need to request to a replacement card by filling out the [I-102, Application for Replacement/Initial Non-immigrant Arrival-Departure Document application](#). You will need to submit this application with a \$330 application fee to USCIS.