

## **Visa Process at the University of Redlands**

Applying for a visa can be a long and complicated process. This document outlines the steps to obtain your visa. If you have any questions, please email [oiiss@redlands.edu](mailto:oiiss@redlands.edu).

### **1. Receive I-20 (F-1 student) or DS-2019 (J-1 student) from the University of Redlands by Fedex.**

Check your immigration documents for accuracy. Be sure to check your I-20 or DS-2019 for accuracy once you receive it. If everything is accurate, sign your I-20/DS-2019. If you notice a problem, contact the International Student Advisor immediately so this can be resolved.

### **2. Pay the SEVIS fee, if applicable.**

You must pay the SEVIS fee after receiving your initial attendance I-20 or DS-2019, but prior to your visa appointment. This fee is separate from and in addition to the visa application fee, and may be paid online or by mail. The SEVIS fee is \$200 for F-1 students or \$180 for J-1 Exchange Visitors. Proof of payment is required when you appear for your visa interview and when you enter the United States, so save a copy of your SEVIS fee receipt.

Students who have transferred their SEVIS record from a previous institution and have already paid the SEVIS fee may not be required to pay again. However, if you attended a US institution but left the US for more than five months and now have a new SEVIS number, you must pay the SEVIS fee again.

To pay the SEVIS fee or for more information, please refer to the US Immigration & Customs Enforcement website (<https://www.ice.gov/sevis>).

### **3. Schedule your US visa interview**

You may apply for a US visa only from outside the United States at a US Embassy or Consulate abroad. Generally, you may apply up to 120 days before the program start date listed on your I-20 or DS-2019. Students who have been issued a form I-20 will apply for an F-1 visa; students or scholars who have been issued a form DS-2019 will apply for a J-1 visa.

If you have previously been enrolled at a US institution but left the US for more than five months and now have a new SEVIS number, you must pay the SEVIS fee again and are advised to apply for a new visa even if you have an unexpired visa in your passport.

*Optional:* Many countries have EducationUSA Advising Centers that offer assistance to international students including pre-departure orientation and workshops that provide guidance in the US visa application process. EducationUSA Advising Centers are administered and supported by the US Department of State. To find a center near you, visit EducationUSA\_website (<https://educationusa.state.gov>).

#### **4. Go to your visa interview**

Information about the visa application process and what to bring with you is listed on the Department of State website (<https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html>). It is important to bring all required documents with you to your visa appointment, and to answer questions clearly and truthfully. Be prepared to explain your reasons for choosing to study in the United States. Remember that as a nonimmigrant visa applicant, you must also demonstrate that you have a residence in a foreign country that you do not intend to abandon. For this reason, it is important to bring documentary evidence that provides this to be true. The video below may help you prepare for your visa interview.

On preparing for your visa interview, see the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vgX7dGyziCl>

#### **Some Important Immigration Terms**

**F-1:** Refers to an immigration status that is used primarily for degree-seeking students who are funded by self or family. F-2 is an immigration status that is the dependent of F-1.

**I-20:** Official immigration document issued to F-1 and F-2 visa holders. The I-20 must be kept accurate and up to date while in the United States.

**J-1:** Refers to an immigration status that is used primarily for students attending school in the United States through an exchange program, or for students who are funded by external organizations (rather than self or family). The J-1 category is also used for visiting scholars and researchers. J-2 is an immigration status that is the dependent of J-1.

**DS-2019:** Official immigration document issued to J-1 and J-2 visa holders. The DS-2019 must be kept accurate and up to date while in the United States.

**SEVIS:** The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System is a web-based database that is used by the Department of Homeland Security to track and monitor information for F-1 and J-1 students, scholars, and their dependents. Information stored in SEVIS is accessible to various federal agencies. Universities that are approved to host international students are required to maintain accurate information in the SEVIS system for all international students and scholars on their campuses.