

Applying for the F-1 Student Visa

The worldwide outbreak of the COVID-19 virus currently presents many challenges to the process of obtaining a U.S. visa and traveling to Yale to begin your studies. We are hopeful that both visa issuance and air travel will return to normal so that you can arrive at Yale for the fall semester. It will be important to start the application for your student visa as soon as possible, as it can in some cases take several weeks and occasionally longer to obtain the visa. These wait times will likely be impacted during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Please know that both OISS and Yale University are closely monitoring the COVID-19 global health emergency and will stay in close communication with you about any updates or changes. You will find COVID-19 updates on the [OISS COVID-19 webpage](#) [1], as well as [Yale University updates](#) [2].

When to Apply

You must apply for your visa well in advance of your arrival, as it can in some instances take several weeks and occasionally longer, to obtain the F-1 student visa.

The U.S. Department of State has instructed U.S. consulates that they may issue an F-1 visa no more than 120 days in advance of the program start date. However, an application for an F-1 visa can be submitted more than 120 days in advance of the I-20 start date in order to accommodate long processing times but the visa validity will never be before the 120 day mark. Check the website of the consulate where you will apply for a visa for detailed instructions.

Pre-Application Checklist

Before you begin the visa application process, you must have the following documents:

[I-20 Form](#)

This will be sent to you in the mail from Yale after you have been admitted. Your I-20 is required when applying for an F-1 student visa at an American embassy or consulate and for entry into the United States. This I-20 has been produced by Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and is an acknowledgement that your record is in the SEVIS system. The form includes your SEVIS ID number, which is the number in the upper corner above the bar code, (usually starts with an N).

Thoroughly review your I-20 to make sure all of the information is correct. Sign the form at the bottom of page 1. If you have any questions, please [contact your OISS adviser](#) [3].

[SEVIS Fee Receipt](#)

All new students coming in F-1 status must pay a one-time SEVIS fee prior to applying for your visa, and must submit the SEVIS fee receipt as part of their application. [You can find instructions about paying the fee on this page](#) [4]. If you are renewing your F-1 visa it is recommended that you have proof of SEVIS fee payment, even though it does not have to be paid again. You can view and print the receipt by clicking "Check I-901 Status" [at the top of this page](#) [5].

[Additional I-20 Forms](#)

If you have family members traveling with you in F-2 status, Yale will mail an I-20 for their use. Each F-2 dependent should have their own I-20 form. Each F-2 dependent I-20 is issued their own SEVIS number but an additional

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SEVIS fee **does not** need to be paid for a dependent.

The Application Process

[1. Complete the DS-160](#)

The first step in applying for a U.S. visa is the online application DS-160.

Access the DS-160 application at the [Consular Electronic Application Center website](#) [6].

[Watch an overview](#) [7] of the online application process.

Read [Frequently Asked Questions about the DS-160](#) [8].

[2. Schedule a Visa Interview Appointment](#)

The next step in applying for a U.S. visa is making an appointment at your closest U.S. embassy or consulate. The earliest you can interview for your visa is 120 days before your start date. It is generally recommended that you apply for a visa in your home country rather than a third country if possible.

At this appointment you will need to present the following documents:

- Your I-20 form
- The SEVIS fee receipt (I-901)
- Your DS-160 confirmation page
- A copy of your financial support documents, i.e. evidence that you have sufficient funds to meet the expenses of studying at Yale, e.g. bank statement or your scholarship or financial aid award letter.
- A valid passport
- Passport-size photographs (that you uploaded in the DS-160 application)
- Completed required visa application forms (available on the U.S. consular websites.)

Check the website of the U.S. consulate/embassy where you are applying to see if there are other requirements.

An application fee and an interview will also be required. There have been (and continue to be) changes in the visa application process and these changes are usually reflected on the consular websites.

[Find the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy](#) [9].

[Find the visa appointment wait times at your local consulate](#) [10].

[3. Attend Your Interview](#)

Attend your scheduled visa interview at your U.S. embassy or consulate. [Here are 10 points to remember when applying for a non-immigrant visa](#) [11].

[4. Receive and Review your Entry Visa](#)

Check the visa in your passport to make sure that all the information on it is correct. If the information is not correct it can only be changed at the embassy or consulate that issued your visa.

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Your I-20 should be returned to you. You will need it to [enter the U.S.](#) [12]

Special Notes

When applying for your student visa, pay careful attention to the following.

[Applying for the F-1 Visa Early](#)

The U.S. Department of State has instructed U.S. consulates that they may issue an F-1 visa no more than 120 days in advance of the program start date. However, an application for an F-1 visa can be submitted more than 120 days in advance of the I-20 start date in order to accommodate long processing times but the visa validity will never be before the 120 day mark. Check the website of the consulate where you will apply for a visa for detailed instructions.

[Entering the U.S. Early](#)

You may enter the U.S. **no more than 30 days** prior to the starting date noted on the I-20 form. If you try to enter the U.S. more than 30 days before this starting date, you may not be permitted to enter the U.S.

[Enter the U.S. by the I-20 Start Date](#)

You must pay particular attention to the starting date noted on your I-20 form, as you must enter the U.S. by this date. If you cannot enter the U.S. by this date, please get in touch with OISS about the process for changing your start date.

[Expiring Visas](#)

The expiration date on your visa may not match the end date of your degree program. If your visa expires before you complete your degree program, you will apply for a new visa on your first trip outside the U.S. after your current visa expires.

A Final Note

If the U.S. consulate has any questions regarding your studies at Yale, please [contact OISS](#) [3]. If your visa application is delayed or denied for any reason, please email your [OISS adviser](#) [13] immediately. Safe travels and we look forward to meeting you when you arrive in New Haven!

Source URL: <https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/applying-for-the-f-1-student-visa>

Links:

[1] <https://oiss.yale.edu/covid-19>

[2] <https://communications.yale.edu/covid-19-information>

[3] <https://oiss.yale.edu/about/connect-with-oiss>

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[4] <https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/applying-for-a-visa/paying-the-sevis-fee>

[5] <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>

[6] <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>

[7] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TLxSobebKF0>

[8] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/forms/ds-160-online-nonimmigrant-visa-application/ds-160-faqs.html>

[9] <https://www.usembassy.gov/>

[10] <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/wait-times.html>

[11] <https://www.nafsa.org/professional-resources/browse-by-interest/10-points-remember-when-applying-student-visa>

[12] <https://oiss.yale.edu/getting-started/entering-the-us-immigration-inspection>

[13] <https://oiss.yale.edu/node/1286>