

U.S. VISAS

U.S. Department of State • Bureau of Consular Affairs



Student Visas

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs
Office of Visa Services

Students are a Top Priority for the Department of State

- The U.S. remains the top global destination for international students - more than 948,000 students came to study in the U.S. between 2021-2022.
- Ensuring students have access to visa appointments is a top priority for the Department of State.
- **In FY 2022, the Department of State issued more student visas than in any year since FY 2016 – more than 581,000 student visas.**



Student Visas, by the Numbers

- **Embassy and consulate prioritization of student visa appointments and expanded interview waiver authorities are behind these numbers.**



- Mission India, which broke their record for the # of students issued in one FY, issued nearly 125,000 student visas in FY 2022.
- Embassy Seoul and Mission Saudi Arabia also broke their student visa processing records, issuing nearly 31,000 and 10,000 visas, respectively.
- While COVID restrictions decreased the number of Chinese students who applied for visas, Mission China still issue nearly 65,000 students.



Increased Staffing at Embassies and Consulates

- **The Department is also actively addressing consular staffing gaps created by the pandemic by onboarding and training new employees.**



- The Department has doubled consular hiring of U.S. direct hires in FY 2022 over FY 2021, and newly trained employees are making their way to overseas consular adjudicator positions.
- We have also expanded the hiring of eligible family members to fill consular positions overseas and in the United States.



The Student Visa Interview

- Student visa adjudications are consistent world-wide, but some processes, like appointment systems, can differ
- COVID rates may impact access to appointments – check travel.state.gov or embassy/consulate website for latest
- Complete DS-160 visa application, pay the application fee, pay SEVIS fee, schedule interview appointment
- Expedited visa appointments may be available
- Expanded interview waiver authorities may allow applicants to apply without an interview



Student Visa Classifications



F

Student in an academic or language program



M

Vocational Student or Other Nonacademic Student



J

Exchange Visitor - Secondary School Student, College/University Student, Degree Student, or Non-degree Student



Required Documents



Passport



Photo



DS-160 Confirmation Page



I-20 (F/M visas) or DS-2019 (J visas)



Receipts for the visa application and SEVIS fee

Additional Documentation - refer to embassy/consulate website for suggested additional documents



Overview of Issuances and Refusals

- **Most students who interview are issued visas**
- **Most Common Refusals: 214(b) and 221(g)**
- **221G for Administrative Processing:** Applicants sometimes require additional assessment to determine their eligibility for a visa. The term “administrative processing” may refer to various additional steps that must be taken
- Each summer, we prioritize the admin processing of student visas to help ensure that eligible students can arrive on time for their studies.
- Applicants can check the status of their applications online by using the Visa Status Check <https://ceac.state.gov/ceacstatracker/status.aspx>. Applicants are also welcome to email the embassy or consulate where they applied to request an update.



Updated Student Residency Guidance

In 2021, the Department of State updated FAM guidance to direct officers to focus on a student's **immediate or present intent** to depart the US after completing studies, and to consider a student's unique profile.

- Residency requirements for students inherently differs from B visitors
- Adjudicate residency based on present intent - not on contingencies of what might happen in the future, after a lengthy period of study in US
- Do not possess ties of property, employment, and continuity of life
- More complex because students typically stay in the US longer
- Not expected to, or do not necessarily have, a long-range plan

We also emphasized attendance at an ESL program or little-known university, college, or community college is not grounds for denial.



Student Visa Issuance Period Expansion

- F and M student visas can now be issued **up to 365 days in advance of the I-20 program start date**, allowing more time for students to apply for a visa.
- The Department of State announced this permanent change, effective January 26, 2023, to better facilitate student applicants' visa interview and travel processes.
- Students are still not allowed to enter the U.S. on a student visa more than 30 days before their program start date.



Expanded Interview Waiver Authority



- Waives in person interview for F, M and academic J applicants:
 - who were previously issued a visa in any visa class
 - or who are citizens or nationals of a Visa Waiver Program Country and have previously traveled to US on ESTA
- Implementation will vary by post, be sure to check website for more information
- Applicants must be a national or resident of the country where they are applying



Expanded Interview Waiver Authority

- An applicant's prior visa refusals must have been overcome or waived, and no current or potential ineligibilities exist
- An applicant denied for the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) is not eligible for interview waiver
- Applicants may need to have fingerprints taken if they were under 14 at first visa issuance
- Policy is currently in effect until December 31, 2023



Interview Waiver Success Stories

- In **Tokyo** in 2022, more than 50 percent of student and exchange visitor applicants utilized the Interview Waiver authority.
- In **Seoul**, more than 25 percent of student and exchange visitor applicants adjudicated by the embassy between April and July 2022 utilized this authority.
- And in **Prague**, Interview Waiver cases made up more than 15 percent of student and exchange visitor applicants so far this calendar year.



Acceptance of Electronic I-20s

- **DHS has indicated that Designated School Officials (DSOs) may electronically send Forms I-20 to student email addresses listed in SEVIS**
- Schools do not need to request permission or report plans to electronically send Forms I-20
- Electronic signatures are valid for 12 months for F visas and 6 months for M visas
- Students print their forms and bring them to the interview
- Hard copy “wet signed” DS-2019s are still required for J visa applications.



COVID-19 Vaccine Requirements

- Non-citizen, non-immigrant air travelers to the U.S. are required to be fully vaccinated

	Vaccines Approved or Authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration	Vaccines Listed for <u>Emergency Use (EUL)</u> by the <u>World Health Organization</u> ↗	Certain Clinical Trial Vaccines which Have Confirmed Efficacy
Single dose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janssen/J&J 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janssen/J&J • Convidecia (CanSinoBIO) 	
2-dose series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech) • Spikevax (Moderna) • Novavax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech) • Spikevax (Moderna) • Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca) • Covaxin • Covishield • BIBP/Sinopharm • CoronaVac (Sinovac) • Nuvaxovid (Novavax) • Covovax 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medicago



Vaccine Requirements: Exemptions

- Children under 18 are exempted
- Citizens of a country with limited vaccine availability

Table 4. List of Foreign Countries with Limited COVID-19 Vaccine Availability (Effective June 28, 2022)

Burkina Faso	Malawi	South Sudan
Burundi	Mali	Sudan
Cameroon	Niger	Syrian Arab Republic
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Nigeria	United Republic of Tanzania
Eritrea	Papua New Guinea	Yemen
Haiti	Senegal	
Madagascar	Somalia	



Commitment to International Students

- **In FY 2022, we issued more student visas than in any year since FY 2016 – more than 581,000 visas.**
- **Prioritization of Student Visa Appointments**
- **Extension of Student Interview Waiver Program**
- **Commitment to Continued Outreach**



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Thank You!