



Information on

SEVIS Fee Requirement: F-1 Students at Rice

Office of International Students & Scholars

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All foreign nationals who come to the United States on F-1 visa status for the purpose of pursuing a full course of study in institutions such as colleges, universities, and language training programs are required to pay the SEVIS fee of \$200 as per **8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)**. This fee is in addition to the visa application fee.

The SEVIS fee is payable one time for each single educational program in which an F-1 student participates, extending from the time the student is granted F-1 status to the time the student falls out of status, changes status, or departs the U.S. for an extended period of time. The money collected will be used by the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to fund the Student and Exchange Visitor Program. This program makes it possible for international students and exchange visitors to attend schools in the United States. The fee also funds the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), a computer system employed to track international students and exchange visitors during their stays in the United States.

Who must pay the SEVIS fee and when must it be paid:

You will need to pay the SEVIS fee if:

- You are seeking an F-1 visa from a United States embassy or consulate for first-time attendance in a college and university. In this case, the SEVIS fee must be paid BEFORE visa issuance.
8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)
- You hold a valid F-1, have been absent from the United States for a period of more than 5 months (not working on your studies during this time with the prior approval of your school), and will re-enter the U.S. for a new program of study. In this case, the SEVIS fee must be paid BEFORE re-entry to the U.S.
8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)
- As a resident of a contiguous territory or adjacent island, you are exempt from the visa requirement (for example, you are a citizen of Canada or Bermuda), and will apply for admission at port of entry to begin initial attendance at a U.S. school. In this case, the SEVIS fee must be paid BEFORE entry to the U.S.
8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)

F-2 visa holders, the spouse and dependents of the F-1 visa holder, are not required to pay the SEVIS fee. See the section entitled "A Note About Processing Times" for further important fee payment considerations.

Once paid, the SEVIS fee is non-refundable, unless paid by mistake, even if your visa is denied or, subsequent to issuance of the visa, you choose not to come to the United States. If you applied for an F-1 visa and paid the SEVIS fee within the last year but were denied a visa, you do not have to pay the SEVIS fee again as long as you re-apply for the same kind of program with 12 months of the initial denial.

How do I pay the SEVIS fee?

The fee can be paid to the DHS by mail or online and must be accompanied by a Form I-901. It can be paid by you or by a third party (such as a friend, family member, or other interested party) inside or outside the US. It cannot be paid at a U.S. embassy/consulate or at the port of entry.

To Pay Online

1. Find the Form I-901 at www.FMJfee.com.

2. Complete the form online and supply the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information. *Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your I-20 form.
3. Print a copy of the online receipt.
4. Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents

To Pay By Mail

1. Obtain a Form I-901 “Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, and M Non-immigrants.”
 - ✍ Download the form from www.FMJfee.com
 - ✍ Request the form by phone at 1-800-870-3676 (inside the US.)
2. Complete the Form I-901. Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your I-20 form.
3. Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft (drawn on US banks only¹) in the amount of \$200 USD, made payable to “The Department of Homeland Security.”
4. Mail the completed I-901 and payment to the address listed on Form I-901.
5. A Form I-797 receipt notice should be mailed within 3 days of processing the fee. Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents.

Special Note: Many foreign banks are able to issue checks or money orders drawn on a U.S. bank. You may therefore obtain a check from: a) a bank chartered or operated in the United States; b) a foreign subsidiary of a U.S. bank, or c) a foreign bank that has an arrangement with a U.S. bank to issue a check, money order, or foreign draft that is drawn on a U.S. bank.

A Note About Processing Times and Payment Verification:

If you pay the SEVIS fee online, your payment is processed immediately and, at the time you make payment, you can print a receipt directly from your computer. This computer-generated receipt can be used to verify you have paid the fee at an embassy, consular post, or port of entry. Mailing the SEVIS fee does not constitute payment. The fee is processed when it is received by DHS. If you mail your payment rather than pay online, it can take a considerable amount of time for payment to be received and for you to receive a receipt by return mail.

Whether you choose to pay the fee online or by mail, a paper receipt will be mailed to the address you provide on Form I-901. You may choose to have this receipt sent to you either by regular mail or, at an additional charge, by express delivery.

A paper receipt is not required in order for you to be issued a visa or to be admitted at the port of entry. Embassies and consular posts will be able to verify your fee payment without a receipt in most circumstances if you pay the fee far enough in advance of your visa interview. Electronic payments must be submitted at least 3 business days in advance of the interview if you will rely on electronic fee verification at the consulate. Mailed payments must be sent in a manner that assures arrival at the DHS address listed on the I-901 at least 3 business days before the scheduled interview.

Preparing For Your F-1 Visa Interview:

This information is for people who plan to enter the United States for the first time to study. For information on bringing dependents to the U.S., returning to continue studies, or renewing your visa, or for more details on how to apply for a student visa, refer to the U.S. Department of State website, at:

<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/student.html>

STEPS

1. Consult the instructions available on the website of your local U.S. Consulate or Embassy on how to get an F-1 international student visa. A list of Consulates and Embassies can be found at <http://usembassy.state.gov/>.
2. After you receive an I-20 form from the school that you want to attend, follow the U.S. Embassy/Consulate’s instructions to schedule an interview for your F-1 student visa. It is important to apply for your student visa as

far in advance as possible. Many consulates recommend that appointments be made no more than 90 days from the intended date of travel, but some can make earlier arrangements for interviews.

3. Complete the following:
 - a) DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form
 - b) Upload digital photo while completing DS-160. Please note that the photo must be in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#)
4. Pay the visa application fee by following instructions on your local U.S. embassy or consulate's web site.
5. Pay the \$200 SEVIS fee.
 - You must bring the receipt of fee payment with you to the interview. If you have lost the receipt, the Visa Officer should be able to view your payment history in his or her database.
 - If you are transferring schools, extending your program, applying for an F-2 dependent visa, or have paid this fee and been denied a visa within the last twelve months, you do not need to pay the SEVIS fee again.
6. Prepare and bring to your visa interview the following:
 - a) A passport valid for at least six months
 - b) Form I-20 (sign the form under *Item 11*)
 - c) School admission letter
 - d) DS-160 Confirmation page
 - e) Two 2"x 2" photographs in the prescribed format (see the travel.state.gov website)
 - f) A receipt for the visa application fee
 - g) A receipt for the SEVIS fee. If you have not received an official receipt in the mail showing payment and you paid the fee electronically, the consulate will accept the temporary receipt you printed from your computer. If you do not have a receipt, the consulate may be able to see your payment electronically if your fee payment was processed at least 3 business days before your interview.
 - h) Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period you intend to study.
 - i) Any information that proves that you will return to your home country after finishing your studies in the U.S. This may include proof of property, family, or other ties to your community.
7. Remain calm and answer all the Visa Officer's questions to you openly and honestly.

Applying for an F-1 visa, change of status or reinstatement:

- ☞ Obtain the appropriate Form I-20 from a DHS-approved school.
- ☞ Pay the SEVIS fee by mail or online.
- ☞ Make a copy of the I-797 (mail) or computer receipt (online) for your records.
- ☞ Submit a copy of the I-797 or computer receipt with your visa, change of status or reinstatement application
OR
- ☞ Students who are exempt from visa requirements, such as Canadians, should take a copy of the SEVIS fee receipt to present at the port of entry with the appropriate I-20. It will not be possible to pay the fee at the port of entry.
- ☞ For change of status or reinstatement applications, if you previously paid the SEVIS fee while attending a different school, you should submit a copy of that school's I-20 form with your application.

SEVIS Fee Frequently Asked Questions:

Will the DHS keep a record of my payment on file?

Fee payments should be entered into your permanent immigration (SEVIS) record but it is strongly recommended that you retain a copy of your fee receipt (form I-797) to use as needed.

If I have already paid the SEVIS fee for one school, and then decide to attend another, do I have to pay the fee again?

If you have been accepted to more than one institution and paid the fee using the SEVIS ID number of an institution you will not be attending, you will not have to pay the fee again. Bring the I-20s of both the school for which you paid the fee and the school you will be attending, as well as your SEVIS fee payment receipt, to the consulate or port of entry (if you are applying for a visa, you should bring both of the I-20s back to the consulate).

What about my F-2 dependents?

F-2 dependents do not have to pay the fee.

Do I have to pay if I transfer to another school, travel outside the U.S. or renew my visa?

The SEVIS fee is not required when transferring schools, changing to another degree program or level, requesting a program extension, renewing an F-1 visa or using F-1 program benefits such as practical training. If you are in status when you travel internationally and are not physically outside of the U.S. for more than five months, you will not be required to pay the fee.

When do I pay the SEVIS fee?

The fee must be paid at least 3 business days prior to applying for your visa, or applying for admission at a U.S. port of entry for those exempt from the visa requirement. The fee must be paid prior to submission of a change of status petition or reinstatement application.

Can I pay the SEVIS fee at a university, consulate or port of entry?

No. At this time the SEVIS fee can only be processed by the Department of Homeland Security via mail or online.

I applied to more than one school, and have more than one I-20 form. What happens if I pay the SEVIS fee for one school, and then I change my mind and decide that I want to attend the other school? Is my paid SEVIS fee transferable?

Yes. But you must submit the I-20 form with the SEVIS ID number that you listed on the I-901 form with you to the U.S. consulate/embassy. For change of status or reinstatement applications, please see next question.

What if my F-1 visa application is denied?

The SEVIS fee will not be refunded. However, if you reapply for a new F-1 visa within 12 months of the denial, you will not have to pay the fee again.

Helpful Websites:

U.S Embassies Abroad: <http://usembassy.state.gov/>

Special Visa Processing for citizens of Cuba, Syria, Sudan, Iran:
<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/section-306.html>

Visas for Third Country Nationals in Canada or Mexico:
<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/nonimmigrants-present-visiting-canada-mexico.html>

Fees for Visa Services: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/fees/fees-visa-services.html>

Visa Photo Requirements: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html>

Visa Denials: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/denials.html>

Airport Status: <http://www.fly.faa.gov/flyfaa/usmap.jsp>

What to expect upon arrival at a U.S. port of entry:
<http://www.cbp.gov/travel/international-visitors/study-exchange/exchange-arrivals>
<http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/2013/04/here-to-help-what-to-expect-at-a-port-of-entry-with-a-us-customs-and-border-protection-officer>