Applying for F-1 Visa and Reporting to Stevens

This handout has been prepared to provide you with general information on how to apply for an F-1 student visa and prepare for your arrival to the U.S.

**Form I-20:** Carefully read your Form I-20 to ensure that all information is correct, and that the spelling of your name, and date of birth appear exactly the same as in your passport. If any information on your Form I-20 is incorrect, please contact the ISSS office newintlstudent@stevens.edu. Be sure to sign the I-20 at the bottom of the first page.

**Pay SEVIS I-901 fee:** This required fee must be paid by new students with ‘Initial Attendance” I-20s who are beginning an academic program in the US in F-1 status. Your assigned SEVIS ID number is in the upper left corner of page #1 of your Form I-20. Students have a number of options to pay the SEVIS fee including the use of credit card. Citizens from Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria or Gambia must pay by money order, Western Union Quick Pay or certified check drawn from a U.S. bank. Please make sure to print and retain the SEVIS I-901 Fee receipt along with other immigration documents to use as needed. A copy of the I-901 SEVIS Fee payment receipt must be included with the visa applications. For detailed information, please refer to the FMJFEE website (www.fmjfee.com).

**Applying for F-1 Student Visa:** Students are encouraged to apply for a visa as soon as they receive Form I-20 to provide ample time for visa processing. Please be advised that U.S. Embassies /Consulates can issue F-1 visas up to 120 days in advance of a program’s start date as listed on the Form I-20. However, each U.S. Embassy or Consulate sets its own interview policies and procedures regarding visas, thus students should consult a U.S. Embassy for specific application instructions.

For the current listings of U.S. Embassies and Consulates visit http://usembassy.state.gov

Documents required for the visa interview generally include:

- A copy of your acceptance letter
- Form I-20 (original) issued by Stevens and signed by the student
- SEVIS I-901 Fee payment receipt
- Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, Form DS-160 can be accessed here: Consular Electronic Application Center. Upon completion of the Form, print and keep the DS-160 barcode page
- Visa Application Fee. Check the U.S. Embassy/Consulate website for the fee amount and how to pay it
- Valid passport. It is recommended that you passport be valid for at least 6 months beyond your expected entry to the US
- One photograph. For specifics go to U.S Visas website/Photo Requirement
- Evidence of Financial support to cover tuition and living expenses during the period you intend to study. At a minimum, you must prove that you have sufficient funds for at least one year of study as reflected on your Form I-20
- Transcript and diploma from previous academic intuitions
- Scores from standardized test (e.g. TOEFL, SAT, GRE, etc.) required by the academic institution, in this case, Stevens

**Dependent** (if applicable) Dependents are eligible to apply for an F-2 visa by submitting an F-2 Visa Application form (DS-160). The application must include the dependent Form I-20, proof of funding, and proof of marriage if spouse and a birth certificate, if for minor child.

Please visit the U.S. Department of State website for detailed information and a list of required documents for F-1 visa application.

**Exception to the student visa requirement:** Citizens of Canada and Bermuda are not required to apply for an F-1 visa to enter the U.S., but are required to have a Form I-20 and pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee before entering the U.S. to study.

**Visa Interview tips:** The visa interview is often brief. It is important to be well prepared and make a strong first impression so that you have a good chance of obtaining your visa. During your visa interview, the consular officer will...
assess whether you qualify for an F-1 student visa for university study by taking into account your academic preparation, your financial security, and your English-language ability. Remember, that you are expected to be able to talk about your credentials, your immediate and future academic and professional goals, and why you chose Stevens to pursue your academic endeavors. The officer will also evaluate whether your intention to study in the U.S. is “temporary,” and confirm that you intend to return home after you complete your studies, an important consideration in the visa application process. For helpful tips, please read the document “10 Point to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa” which you will find on the ISSS website under Scheduling and Preparing for the Visa Interview.

**After the Visa is Granted and Processed** check your passport to be sure you and any dependents obtained the correct visa designation (F-1 or F-2). Also, be certain that your Form I-20 is returned to you, as you must have the original Form I-20 with you when you arrive to the U.S.

**Plan your arrival to attend the Mandatory International Student Check-in and General Orientation**, which take place approximately 2 weeks before your program start date. Graduate and Undergraduate Students will receive communication from the Office of Graduate Admissions and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions (respectively) with more details about General Orientation in the coming weeks.

**Entering the United States** - According to immigration regulations, F-1 student visa holders can seek admission to the U.S. up to 30 days prior to a program’s start date as shown on the Form I-20. Regardless of where you enter the US, be prepare to provide the following documents at the Port of Entry to the US Custom and Border Protection (CBP) officer. Note: CBP inspection takes place before you collect your luggage, so please have these documents on your person or in your carry-on bag for immediate access.

- Valid passport with valid F-1 visa
- Admissions letter from Stevens
- Your original Form I-20 issued by Stevens
- SEVIS I-901 fee payment receipt
- Supporting financial documents

We also recommend that you review the Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE) travel FAQs before you arrive to the US.

**Transfer Students**: Students transferring to Stevens from another US institution are not subject to the 30 day arrival limitation and may re-enter the US at any time before the program start date. You must have a valid F-1 visa and “Transfer Pending” I-20 issued by Stevens.

After reviewing all of required immigration documents a CBP officer will stamp your passport if admission is granted. An admission stamp will show the date of admission, class of admission (F-1- for student visa), and how long you may stay in the U.S. which is designated as D/S (Duration of Stay) which means for the duration of your degree program as stated on your Form I-20. It is important that you verify that this information appears on your entry stamp **before you exit** the inspection area at the U.S. Port of Entry.

If your stamp shows the incorrect information, please RETURN to the inspection officer and it be corrected. After arriving in the U.S. your admissions record (I-94) will be available at [www.cbp.gov/i94](http://www.cbp.gov/i94).

**Reporting to the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)**

The ISSS has a **Mandatory International Student Check-In and Immigration Presentation** for all new and transfer students, as well as for students who are changing educational level at Stevens. International students should plan to arrive to the U.S. no later than the program’s start date listed on Form I-20 and report to the ISSS during the scheduled Mandatory International Student Check-In. Information regarding the date and time will be communicated via email and also will be available on the ISSS website at a later date. Please be on the lookout for notifications from the ISSS informing you of the check-in schedule.

Completing Mandatory International Student Check-In is essential for compliance with U.S. Department of Homeland Security regulations and University policies. Failure to timely check in and produce your documents to the ISSS may result in the loss of your lawful F-1 status.