

Enrolling International Students

This information is provided to help schools that want to have the opportunity to enroll foreign students for a complete course of study (i.e., for more than one year).

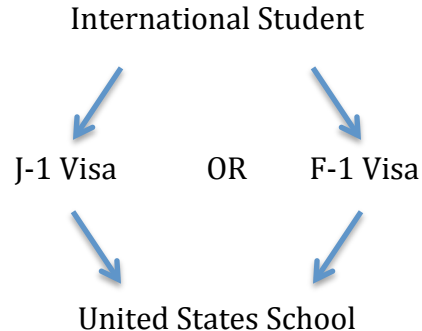
Why do international students want to enroll in a U.S. school? (Why should schools consider enrolling international students?)

Many parents around the world desire that their children attend high school in the United States as a stepping-stone to attend college in the U.S. Parents recognize that U.S. schools offer a better education than schools in their native country. U.S. schools also provide students with the opportunity to learn to speak fluent English. Some parents are Christians who also desire that their child receive a Christian education. Parents so strongly desire these experiences for their children that they are willing to make significant financial sacrifices to do so.

Classical Christian schools may find it beneficial to enroll international students. American students benefit from having international classmates and vice versa. International students help increase student enrollment and provide additional tuition revenue.

What's the first step?

International students need either a J-1 or an F-1 Visa to attend school in the U.S.



J-1 Visa: Students with a J-1 visa classification enter the U.S. through an exchange program and may attend a U.S. school for one year. Schools can allow J-1 students to attend in the same way as any other student. The school does not have to be approved by the government but the exchange program has to be in agreement with school policies. (Exchange programs might not agree.)

F-1 Visa: Students with an F-1 visa classification must get their documentation directly from an approved U.S. school. They are allowed to attend that school for the entire course of study (e.g., four years for high school). They are also allowed to come and go across borders as long as they have their official documentation, i.e., an I-20.

The rest of the information in the document addresses what schools must do in order to be able to issue I-20 forms to international students.

What's the first step?

Read everything on the SEVP website for schools (www.ice.gov/sevis and specifically, <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i17>); the site has all the information you need. (For information on how this process will be done in the future, go to <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/sevis-ii>.)

Apply for SEVP certification.

The basic fee to apply for SEVP certification is \$1,700 (to cover the cost of reviewing the petition), plus \$655 to conduct a mandatory site visit. In addition, a \$655 site visit fee must be paid for *each* school or instructional site listed on the Form I-17B.

If all documentation is readily available, gathering and submitting the required information might not take too much time, perhaps a week or two. It only takes one person to complete the online portion of the application. This person can enlist the help of others to gather documentation, but still be the only one to submit it.

However, be aware that it takes approximately 9–12 months to complete the SEVP certification petition process. Filing 9–12 months prior to the desired certification does not ensure either adjudication by that date or approval of the petition.

ACCS is on the SEVP list of recognized accrediting agencies. This may help schools that are accredited with ACCS.

This list aids the SEVP officials who are processing school applications. Although not a guarantee, the recognition of ACCS accreditation should lessen the reporting burden on schools and give them more credibility with SEVP. Schools that are not accredited by an agency recognized by the SEVP will likely have more work to do in proving their authenticity. Go to the official website to see a list of approved accrediting bodies.

A Helpful Glossary

- ☐ I-17: The official documentation that shows a school is certified in SEVP.
- ☐ I-20: The official document that allows a non-immigrant to enter the U.S. as a student and stay for the entire course of study. This is what international students are looking for when searching for a U.S. school to attend; i.e., the ability of the school to issue I-20s.
- ☐ DHS: (Department of Homeland Security)
- ☐ DSO: Designated School Official
- ☐ DoS: (Department of State). The DoS manages non-immigrant visitors in the J visa classification.
- ☐ ICE: (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement). The principle investigative arm of the DHS .

- ❑ F-1 visa: These students get their documentation directly from a U.S. school, and are allowed to attend that school for the entire course of study (i.e., four years for high school). They are also allowed to come and go across borders as long as they have their official documentation (I-20, see below).
- ❑ J-1 visa: Students with this visa classification are under an exchange program and can attend a U.S. school for one year. Sometimes J-1 students want to transfer to F-1 status; that's when the paperwork starts for the school.
- ❑ PDSO: Primary Designated School Official
- ❑ SEVP: (Student and Exchange Visitor Program). On behalf of the DHS, SEVP manages non-immigrants in the F visa classification who want to be students in the United States and U.S. schools who want to enroll these students.

Recommendations from Charlene Polek, previously registrar at Logos School:

The best thing you can do is read everything on the SEVP website for schools (www.ice.gov/sevis and specifically, <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i17>)—the site has all the information you need.

Approval for certification and approval for any changes made—even after the school has been approved—can take a very long time.

Start out with one PDSO and at least one DSO. Later, it will be helpful to have at least a couple of DSOs to process I-20s, but this also depends on the number of international students you have.

Pay attention to deadlines and grace periods. Failure to do so may result in a student being terminated in the system. Once terminated, they become “out of status” and are not here legally.

Once approved, don't hesitate to call the SEVP Response Center for general questions or the SEVIS help desk for technical questions. (The phone numbers are listed in the “Contact Us” section of the website at www.ice.gov/sevis).

What difficulties did you encounter while serving at Logos School?

Once a school is certified there may be changes, such as a different phone number, that must be kept current on the I-17 form. It takes a very long time for SEVP officials to adjudicate changes in SEVIS. These changes may be denied, at which time more information might need to be provided and more time might have to pass before final ruling. Make sure the school administration knows that even the simplest changes in school name, grade levels, designated school officials, address, phone numbers or emails, can bring about cause for adjudication. If changes must be made, look over everything on the I-17 and petition to make all the changes at once.

Some students, although very eager, simply do not have a good enough grasp of the English language to understand the material taught in their classes. Speaking and comprehension skills vary from student to student. It is best to require a certain

score on a common proficiency test, like the TOEFL (Test of English Language Proficiency) or ELPT (English Language Proficiency Test). Be sure to interview the student over the phone before accepting his or her application. The language barrier could become quite time-consuming for the teachers who are trying to help the international student understand assignments and material taught.

Given the additional costs to achieve school recognition with SEVP, and the additional work required to process international student applications, it is appropriate to assess a higher application fee for international student applications.