



Applying for a Nonimmigrant Student Visa

Note: This handout is intended only as a guide. It is important that you check for updated information directly from the U.S. embassy or consulate where you will apply for your nonimmigrant visa, as requirements may vary based on country. You may find contact information for the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest you at <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.

Step 1: Schedule a visa interview appointment at a U.S. embassy or consulate. Before scheduling your interview, you must be admitted to MSU Denver and you must have received your Form I-20. Visa interview appointments must be scheduled online. To schedule an appointment at the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest you, visit <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.

Step 2: Prepare all supplemental documentation to provide to the visa officer during your appointment. Required documentation includes:

- All 3 pages of the Form I-20, provided by MSU Denver. The I-20 must be signed and dated by the applicant at item #11 on page one.
- Nonimmigrant visa application, Form DS-160, available online at <https://ceac.state.gov/>.
- Passport valid for at least six months after your intended date of entry in the U.S.
- One 2x2-inch (51x51-mm) recent color photograph, showing full face, without head covering, against a white or off-white background.
- Receipt of payment of the visa application fee.
- Receipt of payment of the SEVIS I-901 fee, payable online at www.FMJfee.com.
 - Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your I-20.
 - Print a copy of the receipt. You may wish to make copies of this receipt, as it may be needed for future visa applications.
 - MSU Denver will not pay this fee for you; you must pay this fee.

Additional documentation that you should prepare includes:

- Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions attended.
- Scores from standardized tests required by the educational institution, such as TOEFL, IELTS, etc.
- Financial evidence showing that you or your financial sponsors have sufficient funds to cover tuition and living expenses for one year. This financial documentation should match what was provided to MSU Denver. Documentation may include affidavits of support, bank statements, scholarship letters, or other documents showing liquid assets available for educational support.
- Proof of your binding ties to a residence in your home country which you have no intention of abandoning.
- *For applicants with dependents:* Proof of the student's relationships to his/her spouse and/or children (i.e., marriage and birth certificates). It is preferred that families apply for F-1 and F-2 visas at the same time, but if the spouse and children must apply separately at a later time, they should bring a copy of the student visa holder's passport and visa, along with all other required documents.

If you are denied the F-1 visa, you may apply again. Should this happen, contact the International Admissions Counselor at MSU Denver for advice on how to prepare for a second interview.

Important Tips to Remember for Your Visa Interview

1. Ties to Your Home Country

Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the United States. "Ties" to your home country are the things that bind you to your home town, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing officer may ask about your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans and career prospects in your home country.

2. Practice in English

Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview.

3. Speak for Yourself

Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.

4. Know the Program and How It Fits Your Career Plans

If you are not able to explain the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future professional career when you return home.

5. Be Brief

Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

6. Additional Documentation

It should be immediately clear to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time.

7. Not All Countries are Equal

Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the United States.

8. Employment

Your main purpose in coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students do work on-campus during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program. If your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the United States. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the United States. Volunteer work and recreational classes are permitted activities.

9. Dependents Remaining at Home

If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family will need you to remit money from the United States in order to support themselves, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

10. Maintain a Positive Attitude

Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.