

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

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## Applying For Your F-1 Visa

This information is for students who plan to enter the United States for the first time to study. You will likely find and hear lots of information (and misinformation as well!) about applying for your student visa. University of Minnesota Crookston has a great deal of experience with international students and visas, and we hope this general information will be helpful and useful.

### Steps for applying for a visa:

1. Find the US Embassy or Consulate where you will apply using the locator at <http://www.usembassy.gov/>. Generally speaking, you should apply and interview in the country where you live. Locate specific instructions about applying for an F-1 visa on the website of the Embassy or Consulate where you will apply.
2. You must have an I-20 form (sometimes called Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Status) from the school – if you don't yet have your University of Minnesota Crookston I-20 form, please contact Sok Leng Tan, [tans@umn.edu](mailto:tans@umn.edu), to provide the required information to receive your form.
3. Complete the online visa application form DS-160 <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>. Please ensure the photo you upload while completing the form meets the required photo standards <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/photos.html>. Upon completing the form, be sure to print the confirmation as you will need it at the interview.
4. Schedule an appointment for your visa interview at the US Embassy or Consulate according to the instructions specific to that site (locator at <http://www.usembassy.gov/>). The wait time for the interview varies based on location and time of year. We encourage you to apply early! Usually you may apply up to 120 days ahead of the start date listed on your I-20, but you may only enter the USA within 30 days of the start date on your I-20.
5. You must pay the SEVIS Fee (sometimes called I-901 fee) **and** the Visa Application Fee **before** the interview.
  - a. SEVIS Fee \$350 - Most students can pay online using a credit card at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com). The site for payment is becoming mobile friendly. Be sure to save or print your receipt when done! Students from some countries (currently Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria or The Gambia) may be required to pay using Western Union or an alternate method – if so instructions and helpful information can be found at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu-instructions>
  - b. Visa application fee – The visa application fee and method of payment may vary from country to country. The Embassy or Consulate should provide you detailed information about the amount and method of payment at your location.

6. The documents you should bring to the interview include your passport, confirmation of completing the DS-160 online, I-20 form, acceptance letter from UMC, receipts showing payment of SEVIS Fee and Visa Application Fee, academic documents showing your academic level and preparation for study such as transcripts from secondary school, recommendation letters, and test results, evidence of English proficiency such as IELTS or TOEFL result, financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover the cost of education, and any information you have showing ties to your home country and proving you intend to return when you finish your studies. It is required you adequately demonstrate to the Visa Officer you will return home following your studies.
7. During the interview you should remain calm and answer all the Visa Officer's questions openly and honestly. It is important you be your authentic self and genuinely engage with the Visa Officer about your plans to study in the United States. While it is good to be prepared and able to articulate why you chose UMC and how study in the United States will benefit you, you should not memorize a script or present a prepared speech.

#### Additional Resources

The following resources provide accurate, reliable, and helpful information about the visa process for F-1 students:

1. Education USA offices – office locator at [educationusa.state.gov/find-advising-center](http://educationusa.state.gov/find-advising-center). These offices provide information and assistance to students wishing to study in the USA, usually at low or no cost to the student. We suggest every student visit the Education USA office and ask for their assistance to help prepare your visa application and ready you for the interview. They oftentimes also run helpful and valuable pre-departure orientations for students.
2. US State Department visa information for students <http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas.html> This website includes information, a link to the Embassy locator, a lookup for interview wait times by Embassy location, along with some frequently asked questions.
3. US Department of Homeland Security "Study in the States" website – <http://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/ive-been-accepted> provides information and helpful links.
4. US Department of Homeland Security also provides information for students on its Immigrations and Customs Enforcement SEVP website <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students>

Canadian students are not required to have a visa prior to arrival, but must complete certain steps in advance allowing you to obtain F-1 status at the time you enter the United States – please see the Canadian student entry information page.

Please stay in touch with UMC and let us know once you have obtained your visa – we always appreciate receiving that update!

If you need further assistance, are denied a visa when you apply, or have questions, please contact Sok Leng Tan, [tans@umn.edu](mailto:tans@umn.edu), as soon as possible.