International Student and Scholar Services Office
I-20 Pre-Arrival Material

- Checking in With ISSSO
- I-20 / DS-2019 Information
- Arriving as an F-1 Student
- I-901 SEVIS Fee for F/J Nonimmigrant Students and Exchange Visitors
- How to Apply for a Student Visa
- General Information
- Campus Map
ATTENTION

Please check your I-20 to make sure that the information is printed correctly. This includes your name, date of birth, country of birth, country of citizenship, level of education, concentration, program start and end dates, and your financial information.

*Do NOT attempt to enter the U.S. more than 30 days prior to the reporting date on your Form I-20 (#5) or Form DS-2019 (#13).

*U.S. federal regulations require that all international students report to the International Student and Scholar Services Office upon arrival in the U.S.

Please make photocopies of the following documents and bring them to our office along with the original documents:

*I-20 (copies of front and back)
Make sure that the immigration stamp is clear. We need copies of all I-20s that you have been issued to you (including those from other schools).

*I-94 card (copies of front and back)
This is the white card that was placed into your passport when you arrived in the United States. Make sure that the immigration stamp is clear.

*Passport
Copies of the identification pages and the page showing the expiration date.

*Student Visa
Congratulations! Enclosed is your I-20 or DS-2019. Read the following instructions carefully, and contact us with any questions. We look forward to welcoming you to St. John’s University.

1. REVIEW AND SIGN YOUR I-20/ DS-2019
Review your I-20 or DS 2019 to ensure all information is listed correctly. Notify ISSSO immediately if it contains any errors. **Sign and date your I-20/DS 2019 at the bottom of the first page.**

2. APPLY FOR A STUDENT VISA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
Most international students are required to obtain an F-1 student visa (if you have a Form I-20) or a J-1 student visa (if you have a Form DS-2019). To apply for a visa, visit travel.state.gov to find the U.S. Consulate or Embassy nearest you. Application procedures, requirements, and processing times vary so contact your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate on how to obtain a student visa.

3. PAY THE $200 SEVIS I-901 FEE
If your I-20/DS-2019 was issued on or after September 1, 2004 and is marked for “initial” attendance (see #3 on your form I-20), you are required to pay the SEVIS I-901 fee.
   **To Pay Online:**
   a) Visit fmjfee.com
   b) Complete the I-901 form online and submit payment using a Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Be sure to write your name EXACTLY as it appears on your Form I-20.
   c) Print a copy of the online receipt
   **To Pay by Mail:**
   a) Obtain a Form I-901 “Fee Remittance for Certain F,J, and M Nonimmigrants” online at fmjfee.com or by calling The Department of Homeland Security at + 011-785-330-1048.
   b) Complete the Form I-901. Be sure to write your name EXACTLY as it appears on your I-20.
   c) Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft (drawn on U.S. Banks only) in the amount of $200 USD, made payable to “I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee”
   d) Mail the completed Form I-901 and payment to the address listed on Form I-901.
   **To Pay using the Western Union Quick Pay:**
   a) Visit www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm for Western Union instructions.
   b) Print and bring a copy of these instructions along with a copy of the sample form to a local participating Western Union Agent location.

4. PROTECT YOUR DOCUMENTS
Make photocopies of important documents and keep them organized in a portable file during your entire stay in the United States. Important documents include:
- Passport, visa, I-20 or DS 2019, any previously issued I-20’s or DS-2019s, and health records
- Proof of financial support, letter of admission and any other correspondence with the University
- Academic award and records from past study; high school, college, TOEFL & other score reports
- If accompanied by dependents (spouse or children), bring marriage certificates and birth certificates establishing your relationship with the dependent(s)

International Student & Scholar Services Office
St. John Hall, Room 116  Phone: (718) 990-6083 Fax: (718) 990-2070  ISS@stjohns.edu
Arriving as an F-1 Student

Your arrival as an F-1 student in the U.S. will be smoother if you know what to expect. The Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement has prepared the following guide to ensure the quality of your experience.

Through its “Student and Exchange Visitor Program” (SEVP), the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement is committed to facilitating your stay in the U.S. as you enjoy our nation’s academic, educational, and cultural offerings.

To enhance security without slowing legitimate travel, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has instituted some changes in U.S. entry and exit procedures. Careful planning and preparation by international students can ensure that any delay based on these procedures is minimal.

Plan Your Arrival
You may be refused entry into the U.S. if you attempt to arrive more than 30 days before the academic program start date listed on your SEVIS I-20 form.

Always Hand-Carry Your Documents
There are documents you will need to keep with you when you arrive. Please do not check these documents with your baggage. If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will be unable to present the documents at your port of entry. As a result, you may not be able to enter the United States.

Documents Needed
1. Your passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay.
2. Sealed nonimmigrant documents. (When you receive your nonimmigrant visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate, the Consular Officer will seal your immigration documents in an envelope and attach it to your passport. Do not open this envelope! The Customs and Border Protection Officer at the U.S. Port of Entry will open the envelope.)
   
   We strongly recommended that you hand-carry the following additional documentation:
   - Evidence of financial resources
   - Evidence of student status, such as recent tuition receipts and transcripts
   - A paper receipt for the SEVIS fee, Form I-797

4. Name and contact information for your “Designated School Official”, including a 24-hour emergency contact number at the school.

For comprehensive information on procedures for traveling and arriving in the U.S., visit www.educationusa.info/pages/students/getready.php

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Complete Your Entry Paperwork
If you arrive by Air, flight attendants will distribute Customs Declaration Forms (CF-6059) and Arrival Departure Record Forms (I-94). These must be completed prior to landing. If you arrive by land or sea, the CBP Officer at the port of entry will provide necessary Customs Declaration Forms (CF-6059) and Arrival-Departure Record Forms (I-94) to be filled out upon your arrival.

When You Arrive At Your Port of Entry
Go directly to the terminal area for arriving passengers. Have the following documents available: your passport; SEVIS Form (I-20); Arrival-Departure Record Form (I-94); and Customs Declaration Form (CF-6059). The Form I-94 should reflect the address where you will reside, not the address of your University or academic department.

You will be asked to state your reason for entering the U.S and provide information about your final destination. It is important to tell the CBP Officer that you will be a student, along with the name and address of the University in which you will enroll.

When Your Inspection is Completed
Once your inspection is successfully completed, the inspecting officer will do the following:
- Stamp your SEVIS Form for duration of status (“D/S”) for F visa holders.
- Stamp your SEVIS Form for 30 days beyond program end date for M visa holders.
- Stamp the Arrival-Departure Record Form (I-94) and staple it in the passport.

Following Your Admission Into the U.S.
You should report to St. John’s to register for your courses within 30 days of the date on your SEVIS I-20 form. Failure to do so may result in serious consequences.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Secondary Inspection Requirement
If the CBP officer cannot verify your information, or you lack some required documentation; you may be directed to an interview area known as “Secondary Inspection.” This allows inspectors to conduct extra research to verify your information – without causing delays for other arriving passengers. The inspector will attempt to verify your status using the Student and Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS). They may also need to verify your university or program. You should keep on hand the name and phone number of your St. John’s foreign student advisor. In case you arrive during non-business hours, have an emergency phone number available.

Failure to comply with U.S. government entry-exit procedures may result denied entry to the U.S. Under certain circumstances, the CBP officer may issue a “Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor” Form (I-515A), which authorizes temporary admission. Work with your school to submit the proper documentation without delay.

U.S.-Visit
Every nonimmigrant visitor holding a Visa - regardless of race, national origin or religion - participates in the U.S.-VISIT program, a comprehensive registration system tracking entries to and exits from the United States. For more information visit www.dhs.gov/files/programs/usv.shtm.

National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS)
Some nonimmigrant visitors with a Visa may be asked to give additional information under the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS). At your port of entry you can obtain a packet of information explaining the registration procedure.

I-901 SEVIS Fee for F/J Nonimmigrant Students and Exchange Visitors

Beginning September 1, 2004, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will collect a congressionally mandated fee to cover the costs of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP). International students and exchange visitors are subject to this fee, which will be used to administer and maintain the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), support compliance activities, and establish SEVIS Liaison Officers to provide information and assistance to students and schools.

Some schools charge a fee by the year or semester to support their foreign student/exchange visitor offices and automated systems. These fees are neither mandated nor collected by the U.S. Government.

The payment of I-901 fees are recorded and tracked in SEVIS, the system for collecting, maintaining, and managing information about nonimmigrant student and exchange visitors in the United States.

Who pays the fee?
Those who wish to enter the United States either as a student or an exchange visitor with a Form I-20 or DS-2019 dated on or after September 1, 2004. Participants of federally sponsored exchange visitor programs, which are designated by program codes beginning with G-1, G-2, or G-3, are not subject to this fee. Spouses and dependent children (F-2, M-2) of students or exchange visitors (J-2) do not pay this fee.

How much is the fee?
- Students (F-1, F-3, M-1, or M-3) $200
- Spouses and dependent children (F-2, M-2, or J-2) None
- Exchange visitors (J-1) $180

When do prospective students or exchange visitors pay the SEVIS fee?
- Applicants who require a visa to enter the United States must pay the SEVIS fee before going to the U.S. embassy or consulate for their visa interviews.
- Applicants who are citizens of Canada, Bermuda, Bahamas and residents of certain other islands (see 8CFR 212.1a) wishing to apply for F-1, F-3, M-1, M-3, or J-1 status at a Port of Entry into the United States must pay the SEVIS fee before appearing at the Port of Entry.

How is the fee paid?
- Online at www.FMJfee.com using a credit card or debit card and completing the online Form I-901 (Fee for Remittance for Certain F, M, and J Nonimmigrants); or
- Through the mail by submitting a completed Form I-901 and a check or money order drawn on a U.S. bank and payable in U.S. currency; or
- By a third party such as a school or a sponsor; or
- By selected sponsors of an exchange program by submitting a bulk or group payment.

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When must the fee be paid?
The fee must be paid to ensure that the payment can be deposited and recorded in SEVIS prior to the scheduled visa interview. The interviewing consular will confirm that the fee has been paid by accessing SEVIS. To allow for adequate processing time the fee must be paid:
- At least three business days prior to the visa interview date for electronic submissions.
- For regular mail submissions, 15 business days should be allowed before the scheduled visa interview. This time frame allows adequate time for the fee payment to be received at the DHS address listed on the Form 1-901, deposited, and recorded in SEVIS.
- And local mail processing times to these processing time processing times for accuracy.

How will the payment be verified?
The payment will be recorded in the SEVIS system. However, it is recommended that the paper I-797 or the Internet-generated receipt by brought to the visa interview.
- DHS will issue an official paper receipt (I-797) for every payment received.
- Individuals who are paying by mail, may request Express delivery service for the I-797 receipt at an additional cost of $35.
- Individuals who file electronically will be able to print an electronic receipt immediately at the time of payment.

When must continuing students (F-1, F-3, M-1, or M-3 nonimmigrants who have begun but not finished a program) pay the SEVIS fee?
Continuing students must pay the SEVIS fee before:
- Filing an application for reinstatement when they have been out of status for more than five months; or
- When applying for a new visa and returning to the United States after an absence of more than five months that did not involve authorized overseas study; or
- When filing an application for a change of status to an F, M, or J classification except for changes between F-1 an F-3 or between M-1 and M-3.

When must continuing exchange visitors (J-1 nonimmigrants who have begun, but not finished a program) pay the SEVIS fee?
- Filing a reinstatement application after a substantive violation; or
- Filing a reinstatement application after one is out of status between 121 and 269 days; or
- Applying for a change of exchange visitor category unless the new exchange visitor category is fee exempt (federally sponsored programs with program codes that start with F-1, G-2, or G-3).
How to Apply for a Student Visa

International students must obtain a student visa in order to study in the United States. You must make an appointment with your nearest American Embassy or Consulate and apply for an F-1 (if you have Form I-20) or J-1 (if you have Form DS-2019) student visa. To locate the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate visit www.usembassy.state.gov and obtain the detailed information about the procedures for obtaining your student visa.

Before you apply for the visa, you need to understand the process and rules governing the issuance of a U.S. visa. Many visa applications are denied. In some countries, most applications are denied often because the student did not understand the rules or was not adequately prepared. Don’t let this happen to you! Please read the following information carefully and contact us if you need more information or assistance.

The Procedure
1. Apply for your student visa as soon as possible to allow enough time for visa processing. The embassy/consulate may accept your application but not issue your visa more than 6 months before the date you are required to report to St. John’s University as shown on your Form I-20 or DS-2019.
2. Pay the $200 SEVIS I-901 Fee. If your I-20/DS-2019 was issued on or after September 1, 2004 and is marked for “initial” attendance (#3 on your I-20), you are required to pay the SEVIS I-901 fee.

To Pay Online:
   a) Visit fmjfee.com
   b) Complete the I-901 form online and submit payment using a Visa, MasterCard or American Express. Be sure to write your name EXACTLY as it appears on your Form I-20.
   c) Print a copy of the online receipt

To Pay by Mail:
   a) Obtain a Form I-901 “Fee Remittance for Certain FJ, and M Nonimmigrants” online at fmjfee.com or by calling The Department of Homeland Security at + 011-785-330-1048.
   b) Complete the Form I-901. Be sure to write your name EXACTLY as it appears on your I-20.
   c) Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft (drawn on U.S. Banks only) in the amount of $200 USD, made payable to “I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee”
   d) Mail the completed Form I-901 and payment to the address listed on Form I-901.

To Pay using the Western Union Quick Pay:
   a) Visit www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm for Western Union instructions.
   b) Print and bring a copy of these instructions along with a copy of the sample form to a local participating Western Union Agent location.

What if Your Visa is Denied?
Contact us with details of your denial so we may advise you on how to better prepare your next visa application.

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The Rules

1. By law, you are seen as someone who plans to remain in the U.S. permanently. A consular officer will decide whether or not to grant you a visa to come to the U.S. The consular officer is required by law to assume that you do not plan to return to your home country when you finish your studies. Do not be upset or take this personally. They MUST see you as someone who wants to emigrate to the U.S. Student visas are only given to those who convince the consulate that they intend to return permanently to their home country after completing their studies in the United States. Failure to convince them of this is the NUMBER ONE REASON FOR VISA DENIAL!!!!

2. You must have a valid academic or professional objective in the U.S. You must provide proof of your qualifications for the program of study and how St. John’s University will prepare you for a career in your home country. You must also provide evidence of your ability to finance your educational program.

3. Be brief. Answer questions honestly, directly and to the point.

4. Consular officers are impersonal when administering the law. In the United States, laws are applied equally to all people regardless of status or gender. DO NOT TRY TO NEGOTIATE OR DISCUSS PERSONAL MATTERS with the consular officer.

5. U.S. government officials like documents. Have all evidence of qualifications for a student visa.

Be Prepared

1. Be ready to clearly explain why you want to study in the United States at St. John’s University.
   • Why do you want to study in the U.S.?
   • Why do you want to pursue this program of study?
   • Why did you choose St. John’s University?
   • What career will your studies prepare you for in your home country?

2. Present evidence of your educational qualifications for admission to St. John’s University and original copies of financial documents you submitted to us. Your documents must match exactly what appears on your Form I-20 (in item #8) or DS-2019 (in item #5).

3. Be prepared to convince the consular officer that you will return home permanently upon completing your studies. Present evidence to prove you have “ties” to your country which are so strong, they will force you to return - social, economic and/or family ties.
   • Prove that you have a permanent residence in your country that you do not intend to abandon. A photocopy of a deed or lease to your home is sufficient.
   • If your family owns a business, provide a letter from the bank describing it. If they own property, copies of the deed are helpful.
   • If you have a brother or sister who studied in the U.S. and then returned home, provide a copy of his or her diploma and a statement from his or her employer.
   • If you traveled to the U.S. before as a visitor, emphasize that you returned home before!
   • If your program of study is in great demand in your country, get a letter from a possible employer saying they are interested in hiring people with the degree you will receive.

4. Do not emphasize any ties you have to the U.S. or to family members in the U.S.

5. Practice your English. Unless you are going to study English on campus and it appears on your Form I-20 in item number 6, you are expected to be able to speak it and show your TOEFL score to the consular officer. You may be asked to read from a U.S. newspaper or discuss what your I-20 or DS-2019 says.

6. Do not talk about working in the U.S. unless you have been awarded a teaching assistantship or fellowship on campus. You are required to prove that you can support the costs of studying and living in the U.S. Employment is strictly controlled by immigration and is not guaranteed.

7. If you began your studies in another nonimmigrant status and you received a change of status to F-1, be prepared to discuss how your original purpose for being in the U.S. changed to that of a full-time student. Provide copies of your transcripts to show your studies.
General Information

The International Student and Scholar Services Office is the first place to contact whenever you need help or information during your stay in the United States and at St. John’s University. We are here to help you with all matters of special concern to you and to refer you to other university services. Think of us as your “home away from home.”

Our office acts as the university liaison with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the U.S. Department of State. It provides you with the information you need to maintain lawful status while you are in the United States and answers any immigration questions.

We organize a variety of informational programs to meet your needs, and we work with Student Affairs on social activities to get you involved in university life.

Our staff is always available to listen and help you with the daily challenges of being far away from home. We understand your needs and concerns and are committed to helping you make the most of your international educational experience at St. John’s University. Advisors are available for emergency “walk-ins” and for scheduled appointments.

Queens Campus
St. John Hall, Room 116
Phone: (718) 990-6083
Fax: (718) 990-2070
iss@stjohns.edu
*Public Safety 24 hour emergency hotline (718) 990-5252*

Hours of Operation
- Monday 8:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. (during regular semester, 8:30 – 4:30 during breaks)
- Tuesday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- Friday 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Manhattan Campus
Room 429
To make an appointment, contact the Queens Campus office.

Hours of Operation
- Tuesday 8:30 am – 4:30 p.m.