



Student Visas

March 2025



Student Visa Classifications



F

Student in an academic or language program



M

Vocational Student or Other Nonacademic Student



J

Exchange Visitor - Secondary School Student,
College/University Student, Degree Student,
or Non-degree Student



Student Visa Issuance Period Expansion

- F, M, and J student visas can now be issued **up to 365 days in advance of the I-20 or DS-2019 program start date**, allowing more time for students to apply for a visa.
- Students cannot enter on a student visa more than 30 days before program start date.
- If the school changes, students will need a new visa



Acceptance of Electronic I-20s and DS-2019s

- As of April 27, 2023, **sponsors may digitally sign and transmit Form DS-2019 to exchange visitor applicants**
- **Designated School Officials (DSOs) may electronically send Forms I-20 to student email addresses listed in SEVIS**
- Students and exchange visitors still must print their forms and bring them to the interview



DS-2019 / I-20 and SEVIS

- **Name and date of birth must be 100% accurate**
 - First name(s) and surname(s), as in the passport
 - Titles:
 - Only include when part of your name (Freiherr etc.)
- Special characters = machine-readable characters (for example, ä = ae, ß = ss)
- **Pay SEVIS fee at:** <https://www.fmjfee.com/>



DS-160

- DS-160 form has no fee
(*but the actual visa application does!*)
 - Fill out a new one if needed
<https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>
- **If you change your place of application:** new DS-160 advisable, but not required
 - Update the “Application I.D.” in profile
 - can take up to two hours!
- Errors or missing information? Proactively request correction at the time of your appointment



DS-160 Issues & Challenges

Full Name (including former names):

- First name(s) and surname(s), as in the passport.
- Type out special characters
 - ä = ae, ß = ss.

U.S. Address (if unknown):

- Address of the U.S. university, firm, etc.
(from I-20/DS-2019)

Parents' Names and Dates of Birth:

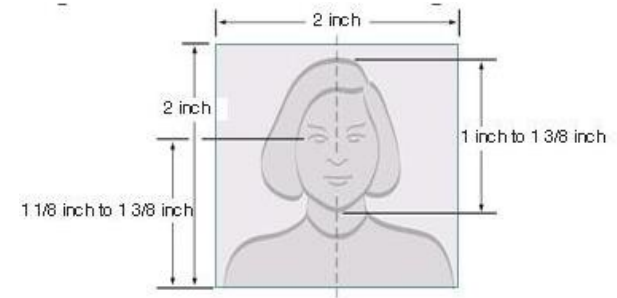
- Include information even if a parent has died or if there is no contact.



The Photo

- **Requirements:**

- In Color
- White or “off white” background
- No glasses, hats, earbuds, headphones, hoodies
- Less than 6 months old



- **The most common mistakes:**

- **Glasses**
- Photo older than **six** months
- Incorrect background / “selfie”
- Do not wear a hat or head covering that obscures the hair or hairline, unless worn daily for a religious purpose. Your full face must be visible.



- **Problems?** bring a compliant photo to the interview on **photo paper**.

- More information on photo requirements is available at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html>



Interview Waiver Program (IWP)

You may be eligible to apply for a U.S. visa or renew your visa in Germany without an interview if you meet the following conditions:

All visa applicants must meet the following requirements:

- You are a national or residency permit holder of Germany
- You are physically present in Germany at the time of the visa application
- You have never been refused a visa
- **You have previously been interviewed for a non-immigrant visa in the same visa class (i.e. F, J, or M)**
- Your previous visa is still valid or **expired less than 12 months ago**



Interview Waiver Program (IWP)

If students created their profiles before 2024, they should go into their GSS profile on Atlas and do a **new appointment request**.

The screenshot displays the U.S. Visa Application Portal interface. At the top, a blue banner reads "APPLY FOR A U.S. VISA in" with a language dropdown set to "English". Below this is a red navigation bar with "Home" and "Logged in as cuerg@state.gov". A left sidebar contains a menu with options: "New Application / Schedule Appointment" (highlighted in red), "Group Scheduling Request", "Appointment History", "Provide Feedback", "Update Profile", and "Logout". Below the menu, a blue box states "First Available Appointment Is Friday April 5, 2024." The main content area shows a breadcrumb trail: "Visa Type" (Nonimmigrant Visa) > "Post" (MUNICH) > "Visa Category" (All Others (C1/D, F...)) > "Visa Class" (F-1). The "Step 1" instruction reads: "Select whether you are applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa or an Immigrant Visa." Below this, explanatory text states: "After you select the purpose of your trip, the following pages will provide information about visa application filing, fee (MRV) payment procedures, appointment availability, and additional steps for approved applicants." Two radio buttons are present: "Nonimmigrant Visa" (selected) and "Immigrant Visa". At the bottom of the form are "Back" and "Continue" buttons. The U.S. Department of State seal is visible in the bottom right corner.

Visa Information and Appointments

- **Visa Service Provider CGI Federal: Contractor** of the U.S. State Department for
 - Visa information
 - Appointment scheduling
 - Fee collection
 - Delivery of passports / visas

ustraveldocs.com

Information: Telephone, Skype, E-mail, Chat.

Appointments (including Emergency)
ONLY through **CGI Federal**.



Emergency Appointments

- If you require an expedited appointment:
 1. Pay immediately
 2. Take the next available appointment
 3. Request an expedited appointment
- You will need to provide justification.
- Applicants will receive an email about approval or rejection. Please confirm or decline as soon as possible if approved.



Appointment / Documents

Appointment:

- Line up **no more than 30 minutes** before your appointment time.
- The time of the appointment **≠** the time of your actual interview

Documents:

- Passport should be valid for the duration of the program, and if not, at least 95 days after the visa interview
- Residence permit (if not EU citizen)
- Appointment confirmation / DS-160 confirmation page
- SEVIS – proof of payment
- DS-2019 / I-20
- Financial Statements

No phones or electronic devices permitted in the
U.S. Embassy/Consulate



The Visa Interview

- Consular officers will review each application individually.
- Consular officers consider primarily the DS-160 form, other necessary documents, and the applicant's responses at the interview.
- The interview is typically in English.
- **The DS-2019/I-20 is not a visa** and does not guarantee visa issuance.
- After the interview, the applicant will learn whether:
 - Qualified for visa
 - Additional documents or steps are required / etc.



DS-2019 / I-20: After Interview

- DS-2019 / I-20 is often returned to the applicant at the time of the interview.
- After receiving the visa, it is best to put the DS-2019 / I-20 form in the passport.

Note: Visa does not guarantee entry

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has final say at port of entry



Online Status Check

Check status online

ceac.state.gov/CEAC

- **Administrative Processing**

"...can take several weeks. ... follow any instructions provided ... at the time of your interview. If further information is needed, you will be contacted."



Delivery Options

for Passport and Visa

Choice of delivery when making an appointment:

Pickup (no additional cost):

- Mail Boxes Etc. 0202 Bundesallee **Berlin**,
- Tri-Punkt Solutions Dachauer Str. **München**
- Mail Boxes Etc. Eschersheimer Landstr. **Frankfurt**

Premium delivery:

- Additional cost, payable only with credit card (not EC-card).
- If the applicant selects premium delivery, but does not pay the fee, the passport will be held at the local pickup location – it is critical that the applicant provide an email address where they can be reached and NOT a visa facilitator's email address

With both options

- **NO** delivery/pickup on Saturday or Sunday
- **NO** pickup at U.S Embassy or Consulates General



Receipt of Visa

Delivery: confirmation email and SMS with tracking number/parcel number.

Upon receipt **IMMEDIATELY** check accuracy!

- Name and date of birth
(automatically transferred from the DS-160 application)
 - *Name variations are possible e.g., Müller = Mueller*
- Visa expiration date

In case of an error, contact us as soon as possible!



Grace Period – Entry and Departure

Before program starts:

- Enter up to—but no sooner than—30 days before Program Start Date.

After program ends:

- J-1: Depart within 30 days.
- F-1: Depart within 60 days.

(Intended for travel or preparation for departure, not internships or work, including unpaid work)



How do I get to the Wegweiser?

By visiting our website
at <https://de.usembassy.gov/contact/>

Or going directly to the Wegweiser at

<https://tinyurl.com/FrankfurtVisas>

<http://tinyurl.com/BerlinVisas>

<http://tinyurl.com/MunichVisas>



Resources

Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

<https://www.cbp.gov>

Entry to U.S. / Border Control

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)

<https://www.uscis.gov/>

After entry to U.S.

(Adjustment of Status, Extension of Admission)

