



# Welcome to Georgetown!

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

Tel: 202.687.5867 | Fax: 202.687.5944  
Website: <http://oip.georgetown.edu/iss>

## VISA & IMMIGRATION PRE-ARRIVAL GUIDE

The start of your program is quickly approaching and we look forward to welcoming you to the Georgetown international community! This memo contains detailed information on the immigration steps required prior to your arrival. Information on other topics such as health insurance, housing, and resources in the Washington, D.C. metro area are available on our website. Once you arrive, our staff, members of the faculty, and the academic advisors in your department will be prepared to answer any remaining questions.

### ORIENTATION & MANDATORY IMMIGRATION SESSION

Orientation is a critical component in your transition to Georgetown. The immigration session will be your first formal immigration responsibility, providing detailed information about your rights and responsibilities as an international student. Attendance is mandatory.

#### *What is Orientation and am I required to attend?*

International Orientation is a series of social events and information sessions on academic life, immigration regulations, health care, employment, and cultural norms in and around Georgetown. It provides international students an opportunity to meet staff and fellow students in their first days at the University, and provides the individualized attention students need to quickly acclimate to their new surroundings. While all undergraduate students are required to attend the entire orientation program, graduate students are only required to attend the mandatory immigration and academic integrity sessions in the morning. Graduate students are strongly encouraged to participate in all orientation activities. The orientation schedule may be found on the Orientations & Arrival portion of our website at: <http://oip.georgetown.edu/iss/arrival.htm>.

### APPLYING FOR YOUR STUDENT VISA

With limited exceptions,\* each international student applying for admission to the United States must hold a valid entry visa. Contact your nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for specific details on how to obtain an F-1 or J-1 non-immigrant student visa. In Taiwan, contact the American Institute.

To obtain an F-1 or J-1 visa, be prepared to present the following documents to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate:

- » Department of State (DOS) Forms:
  - The new DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application (<https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>).
  - or
  - (1) DS-156 (2) DS-157 (for males between the ages of 16-45)\*\* (3) DS-158
- All forms are available at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate or on the DOS website at: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms\\_1342.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html).
- » SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019 (included in this mailing)
- » Passport (valid at least 6 months beyond your program start date)
- » Passport size photograph(s)
- » Proof of English-language proficiency
- » Evidence of financial support (original bank statements, scholarship letter, etc.)
- » Evidence that you have no intention of abandoning residence in your home country (strong family ties, pre-arranged job in your home country or other economic ties, etc.)
- » Georgetown University admission letter
- » Student visa application fee
- » SEVIS fee payment receipt

### \*Exceptions to the Visa Requirement

The most common exception to the visa requirement is made for Canadian citizens and certain landed Canadian immigrants. For information about landed Canadian immigrants and visa requirements, please see:

<http://ottawa.usembassy.gov/>.

Other notable exceptions currently include citizens of the Freely Associated States or FAS (Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau) who are in direct transit from the FAS to the United States, citizens of Bermuda, citizens of British Overseas Territories, Bahamian nationals, and British subjects residing in the Bahamas who complete immigration inspection at Freeport or Nassau.

### \*\*Form DS-157

Please note that some females may be asked to complete Form DS-157. Individuals subject to filing Form DS-157 may also be subject to clearance procedures that may delay visa processing. Please check with your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate for the most up-to-date information on Form DS-157 and security clearance procedures.

## SEVIS FEE

### *What is the SEVIS fee?*

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) charges a one-time SEVIS fee for students beginning a new F-1 or J-1 program. This fee is separate from the visa application fee. Find more information at: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>.

### *Who must pay the SEVIS fee?*

1. An incoming student applying for an F-1 or J-1 visa, whose Form I-20 is marked for initial attendance or whose Form DS-2019 is to be used for initial participation in a program.
2. An incoming student applying for a change of status to F-1 or J-1 from another visa category inside the United States.
3. A current F-1 student in the United States who is filing for reinstatement after being out of status more than five months.
4. A J-1 Exchange Visitor applying for a change of category (J-1 researcher to J-1 student, etc.) within the United States.
5. A J-1 Exchange Visitor in a U.S. Government-sponsored program who is transferring to a non-U.S. Government-sponsored program.

### *Who is exempt from paying the SEVIS fee?*

1. Students transferring their immigration status to Georgetown from another U.S. institution or outside J-1 Exchange Program (except those currently sponsored by the U.S. Government).
2. Dependents (spouses or children under the age of 21) of F-1 and J-1 visa holders.
3. Students applying for reinstatement who have been out of status for less than five months.

### *When do I pay the SEVIS fee?*

1. At least three business days prior to your visa interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate.
2. At least three business days before entering a U.S. port of entry if you are exempt from the visa requirement.
3. Prior to the submission of a change of status application.

### *How do I pay the SEVIS fee by credit card?*

1. Find Form I-901 at: [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com).
2. Complete the form online and supply the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information. \*Enter your name exactly as it appears on your Form I-20 or DS-2019.
3. Print a copy of the online receipt.
4. Make a copy of your receipt and keep it with your other important immigration documents. You will need to take the printed receipt with you to the Consulate or Embassy when you have your interview. If you are applying for a change of status to F-1 or J-1 within the United States, make a copy of the receipt to include with your application.

### *How do I pay the SEVIS fee in my local currency?*

This option is available in any country where Western Union offers its Quick Pay™ service.

1. If you choose this option, do not file Form I-901 online.
2. Access the instructions, along with a completed sample of the Western Union form, on the SEVP website at: [http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu\\_instr.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm).
3. Find the Western Union location nearest you (<http://www.payment-solutions.com/agent.asp>).
4. Bring a printed copy of the instructions and the sample of the completed Western Union form to the nearest Western Union office to process your payment.
5. After three business days, check [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com) to view your payment status. Once payment is confirmed on the website, print out the confirmation page as proof of payment.

### How do I transfer the SEVIS fee?

The SEVIS fee is transferable. It is attached to your name, not to your SEVIS number. Save your receipt of payment with all your important immigration documents. If you paid the SEVIS fee using another institution's Form I-20 or DS-2019 and you have decided to attend Georgetown University instead, simply save both the receipt and the unused immigration form for which the original SEVIS fee was paid and bring them to your visa interview. To request a refund of the fee or assistance in transferring your fee from one institution to another, contact [fmjfee.SEVIS@dhs.gov](mailto:fmjfee.SEVIS@dhs.gov) or call the Department of Homeland Security hotline at (212) 620-3418.

## ARRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

### Report Date

You must arrive in the United States no later than the report date listed on your Form I-20 (section 5) or DS-2019 (section 3), and no earlier than 30 days prior to this date. If you attempt to enter the United States after the report date, you may be denied entry. If you cannot enter by the date given on your immigration document, contact Ms. Giovanna Ubillus, Information Management Coordinator in the Division of International Student and Scholar Services, at 202.687.5867 or [gu3@georgetown.edu](mailto:gu3@georgetown.edu).

### International Travel Following Initial Entry

While students are permitted to enter the United States up to 30 days prior to their program start date, OIP discourages F-1 and J-1 students from entering the United States and then making immediate international travel plans. International travel requires prior verification with the U.S. Government. Since immigration records will only be updated and registered AFTER the mandatory immigration session, students should wait to leave the United States until OIP has completed the registration process with the U.S. Government.

Students who are compelled to travel internationally during this 30 day period prior to the program start date must consult with their IS Advisor prior to entering the United States in F-1 or J-1 status.

### I-94 Card Completion

An I-94 card is the official record of your immigration status in the United States. Carefully complete this white card provided to you during your travels, writing your name exactly as it appears on the student visa stamp in your passport. A student who is exempt from the visa requirement should write his/her name as it is listed on the Form I-20 or DS-2019. The official at the port of entry should stamp the I-94 card either J-1 and D/S or F-1 and D/S, depending upon your immigration document and your student visa. Your portion of the I-94 card should be stapled into your passport for safekeeping.

### Documents

Upon arrival in the United States, you must show the inspections officer:

1. valid passport
2. F-1 or J-1 entry visa
3. original admission letter
4. original financial support documentation
5. Form I-20 or DS-2019 issued by Georgetown. Do not present an immigration document issued by any other institution.

### United States Visitor and Immigrant Indicator Technology (US-VISIT)

The inspections officer will use the US-VISIT Program to register your entry into the United States by taking digital photographs and fingerprints. For more information about US-VISIT, please see: [http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/programs/content\\_multi\\_image\\_0006.shtm](http://www.dhs.gov/xtrvlsec/programs/content_multi_image_0006.shtm).

### NSEERS/Special Registration

At their discretion, immigration inspectors may register non-immigrants in the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) at the port of entry. The process may take between 30 and 120 minutes. Connecting flights should be scheduled to allow sufficient time for this possibility. Students registered via NSEERS should receive an I-94 card marked "NSEERS" and/or "FIN" followed by a series of numbers. All NSEERS registrants should receive written instructions outlining special requirements. For more information, please see: <http://www.ice.gov/pi/specialregistration/index.htm>.

## SCHOOL TRANSFER

If you were previously enrolled in F-1 or J-1 student status at another U.S. institution, you should have requested a transfer of your immigration status to Georgetown. The Georgetown Form I-20 should indicate "Transfer Pending" in Section 3, while a DS-2019 Form lists the transfer release information in section 8. The Georgetown-issued document must be used to reenter the United States if you are currently abroad or if you plan to travel prior to the start of the Georgetown semester. If your F-1 or J-1 student visa is still valid, there is no need to apply for a renewal. Secure all previous I-20s or DS-2019s with your other important documents and have them accessible in case an inspections officer has any questions.