



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

Updated – June 30, 2004

Contact: SEVP Program
202 305 2346

Fact Sheet

WHAT A STUDENT OR EXCHANGE VISITOR CAN EXPECT UPON ARRIVAL AT A U.S. PORT OF ENTRY

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), an office of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in cooperation with the U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection and the Department of State, wishes to assist you in your entry into the United States.

Approximately 28 million nonimmigrants enter or leave the United States annually to conduct business, study, visit family, or tour the country. Legitimate visitors are most welcome and the U.S. government is committed to facilitating their travel. However, a critical need for tighter security requires that we enforce entry and exit procedures.

Careful planning and preparation by students and exchange visitors can ensure that the delay based on these procedures is minimal.

If you are a nonimmigrant student or exchange visitor, here are some things you should do:

- ✓ If you are an initial student or exchange visitor entering to attend school for the first time, you cannot enter the United States more than 30 days before the program start date indicated on your I-20/DS-2019. If you are a continuing student or exchange visitor, including a student or exchange visitor who is transferring schools or programs, you may leave the U.S., and re-enter at anytime provided you have proper documentation from the school or program you will attend upon your return.
- ✓ Before leaving your country, confirm that your passport and visa are still valid for entry into the United States. The passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay.
- ✓ Also, check to see that your visa accurately reflects your correct visa classification.
- ✓ 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. You should not open this envelope! The Customs and Border Protection Officer at the U.S. port of entry will open the envelope.

- ✓ When you travel, you should carry some specific documents on your person. Do not check them in your baggage! If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will not be able to show the documents to the Customs and Border Protection Officer and, as a result, may not be able to enter the United States.

Here are the documents you should carry on your person:

- **Passport (including attached envelope of immigration documents) with visa**
- **SEVIS Form I-20 AB, I-20 MN, or DS-2019**
- **Evidence of financial resources**

In addition, SEVP recommends that you also carry the following:

- **Evidence of Student/Exchange Visitor status (recent tuition receipts, transcripts)**
- **Name and contact information for Designated School Official or Responsible Officer at your intended school or program**
- **Writing instrument (pen)**

If you are traveling by aircraft, the flight attendants on board will distribute CF-6059 Customs Declaration Forms and I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Forms for immigration, before you land at your initial point of entry in the United States. Complete these forms while you are on the aircraft and submit them to the appropriate Customs and Border Protection Officer upon your arrival. **If you do not understand a form, ask the flight attendant for assistance.**

Upon arrival at the port of entry, proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers for inspection at one of the Department of Homeland Security stations. As you approach the inspection station, **have your:** passport, SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019, Form I-94 Arrival-Departure Record, and CF-6059 Customs Declaration Form available for presentation to the Customs and Border Protection Officer. The Form I-94 should reflect the address where you will reside (not the address of the school or program).

If you are entering through a land or designated sea port, the Customs and Border Protection Officer will provide the necessary CF-6059 Customs Declaration Forms and I-94 Arrival-Departure Record Forms at the port of entry. **If you do not understand a form, ask the Customs and Border Protection Officer for assistance.**

Like all entering visitors, you will be asked to state the reason you wish to enter the United States. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. **It is important that you tell the Customs and Border Protection Officer that you will be a student or exchange visitor.** Be prepared to include the name and address of the school or exchange visitor program where you will enroll/participate.

Once your inspection is complete, the inspecting officer will:

- **Stamp your SEVIS Form for duration of status (“D/S”) for F and J visa holders**
- **Stamp your SEVIS Form for 30 days beyond program end date for M visa holders**
- **Stamp the I-94 and staple it in the passport**

SECONDARY INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS:

If your information cannot be automatically verified by the inspector or you do not have all of the required documentation, you may be directed to an interview area known as “secondary inspection.” Secondary inspection allows Inspectors to conduct additional research in order to verify information. Verifications are done apart from the primary inspection lines so that an individual case will not cause delays for other arriving passengers.

In the case your admission/participation needs to be verified, **we strongly advise** that you have readily available the **name and phone number of the foreign student advisor** at your school or the person responsible for your J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. In the event you arrive during non-business hours (evenings, weekends, holidays), you should have a phone number where this individual can be reached during non-business hours.

Failure to provide proper documentation and to comply with entry/exit procedures is cause to refuse the student or exchange visitor admission into the United States. In limited circumstances, if a student or exchange visitor is mostly, but not fully in compliance, he/she may be issued a Form I-515A “Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor”. This form authorizes temporary admission into the United States and requires the student or exchange visitor to take immediate action to submit proper documentation. Noncompliance with the directions contained on these forms may result in denied re-entry.

US-VISIT:

On January 5, 2004, US-VISIT, a comprehensive entry-exit registration system was implemented at all international airports throughout the United States, pre-clearance inspection facilities and designated seaports servicing cruise ships.

All nonimmigrant visitors holding visas (including students and exchange visitors) will participate in the program that involves obtaining a scan of two index fingerprints and a digital photograph. Race, national origin, and religion **are not factors** in the US-VISIT program, as it applies to nonimmigrant visa holders.

For more information visit www.dhs.gov/us-visit

NATIONAL SECURITY ENTRY-EXIT REGISTRATION SYSTEM:

Some individuals will require additional scrutiny and will have to provide additional information under the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, or NSEERS. In the future, NSEERS will be integrated under US-VISIT. *Anyone* could be subject to additional scrutiny and should follow the directions of the Customs and Border Protection Officer if additional information regarding itinerary, length of stay, or other security questions is required. A packet of information will be available at the port of entry explaining the registration procedure.

For more information, search for NSEERS at <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/index.htm>

For greater detail on procedures for traveling and arriving in the United States, visit:

<http://educationusa.state.gov/predeparture/travel/customs.htm>

FOLLOWING ADMISSION INTO THE UNITED STATES:

Students should report to their school as soon as practical and register for courses or validate their intended participation.

Exchange visitors should report to their exchange program Responsible Officer within (but no later than) 30 days after the “Program Begin Date” listed on their Form DS-2019, for validation of intended program participation with the Foreign Student Advisor.

CONTINUING STUDENTS:

Continuing Students may leave the United States and re-enter at anytime with the proper documentation. See your foreign student advisor and obtain an endorsement from the Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer (RO). The endorsement will be made on page 3 of the SEVIS Form I-20 or page 1 of the DS-2019. When returning to the United States, a continuing student/exchange visitor must present a valid SEVIS Form I-20 or DS-2019 with the DSO or RO signature showing that the student is active and in good standing with the school or program.

If you are authorized optional practical training (OPT) by your school, make sure that the school has updated your records in SEVIS to reflect this authorization and issued you a new SEVIS I-20 showing OPT authorization on page 3 of the form.