



Getting a Visa

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GETTING A VISA

Form I-20 and F-1 Student Visa

International students will need a Cornell University **Form I-20** (Certificate of Eligibility for Non-immigration F-1 Student Status) and a valid F-1 visa (issued by an American embassy/consulate) to enter the United States as a student.

Upon receipt of your enrollment deposit, Enrollment Commitment Form, and Declaration of Finances Form, we will send you the I-20 form. Please make sure to fill out the Declaration of Finances form to indicate the name, date of birth, country of birth, and relationship of any dependents who will accompany you. We will issue an I-20 form to apply for an F-2 visa for your dependents.

Before issuing your I-20, we must know if you have been in the US on a F-1 visa issued by another academic program. If so, there will be a Transfer Visa Status document issued to you in lieu of the initial I-20. **Essentially, please be sure to notify us if you have entered the US with an I-20 through another program and plan to stay in the US through the start of your program.** We want to be certain to prepare your documents properly.

How to Obtain a Student Visa

Once you are admitted to Cornell University, you will need a student visa to enter the United States (this is not required of Canadian citizens*; please see below). When applying for the visa at a US embassy or consulate, you need to have:

- a valid passport;
- a **Form I-20** (for F-1 visa);
- a copy of your financial documents; and
- two passport-type photographs.

Note: The name on your passport and your I-20 need to be exactly the same.

In addition, you may also prepare additional materials which can prove your eligibility for a student visa. These may include your letter of university admission, evidence of English proficiency (TOEFL score report), school record or transcripts, and additional evidence of strong ties to your home country. An application fee and a short interview will be required.

Please contact the US embassy or nearest consulate for further information regarding obtaining a student visa in your country. Information may be obtained on the web at <http://usembassy.state.gov/>.

Having a problem getting your visa? Please feel free to contact **Heidi Russell** in the Johnson Admissions Office.

*At the time of this writing, Canadian citizens do not need to obtain a visa stamp to enter the United States to study. However, you do need to request F-1 student visa status when entering the US by presenting an I-20 or DS-2019 form, financial support documents, and evidence of Canadian citizenship.

The Difference Between the F-1 and J-1 Visa

The F-1 visa is granted to a student whose sole purpose is to pursue education in the United States and who intends to return to his/her home country after the completion of studies. The dependents of an F-1 student are granted an F-2 visa if they would like to come to the US with the F-1 student. If your spouse comes to the US on an F-2 visa, s/he is not permitted to work or earn money in any capacity.

The J-1 is an exchange visitor visa. The students who are eligible for Cornell's J-1 program must be funded by Cornell University, an organization, a government, an agency, a foundation, an employer, or an international organization. Students supported solely by family or individual funds are not qualified for Cornell's J-1 program. The dependents of a J-1 student are granted a J-2 visa. After entering the US, a J-2 spouse may apply for employment authorization to work. Cornell University typically issues the I-20 form for a student to obtain an F-1 visa only.

J-1 students receiving funds either from the US government or from their own government are required to return home for two years after completion of studies ("two-year home residence requirement") before being able to return as, or change to, a temporary worker or an immigrant visa.

If you think you are qualified and would like to obtain a J-1 visa, you must submit your request to:

How To Transfer from H-1B Status to F-1 Status

If you are working in the US on an H-1B visa, you will need to apply for a transfer to an F-1 student visa. We recommend you follow the instructions published by the university's International Students and Scholars Office's (ISSO's), found [here](#). It is generally recommended you apply approximately one month before you plan to leave your job, but processing times can vary. You may contact the ISSO to discuss the timing and details of the change of visa status procedure. It is important that you not apply for change of status much earlier than one month prior to leaving your job. Once your status change is approved, you might not be able to continue to work at the job for which you were H-1B status. You will be allowed to enroll in the academic program as long as you have applied for change status even though it may not yet be approved at the time of enrollment.

Studying in the United States

When you enter the United States, immigration officials at the port of entry will stamp your I-20 or DS-2019, return the student copy of the I-20 or DS-2019 form to you, and give you an I-94 card. Make sure your I-94 card is marked "F-1" and "D/S" if you are on an F-1 visa, or "J-1" and "D/S" if you are on a J-1 visa.

Keep a photocopy of all your documents in a secure place. Once they seek to enter the United States, non-immigrant visa holders are admitted and monitored by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS), which is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

If you do not receive your I-20 or DS-2019 in time, you may present Cornell's admission letter, financial documents, and your passport to a US consul in your country to apply for a B-2 prospective-student visa. Be sure to consult with the International Students and Scholars Office before entering on a B-2 prospective student visa. **Do not come to the United States on a B-2 tourist visa or WT (visa waiver program for some countries).**

The following also applies:

- You must maintain full-time student status for nine months of the academic year.
- Since a visa is only a permit to **enter** the United States, you may remain in the United States for the entire period of your degree study without having to renew your visa as long as your I-20 or DS-2019 is valid.
- You are allowed to work for Cornell University up to 20 hours per week during the academic year and full-time during vacation periods.
- It is legally possible for you to obtain permission to work "off-campus" after being on F-1 status for at least nine months. However, you should not depend on this since there may be difficult restrictions placed upon possible employers.
- Upon completion of the MBA program, you will be eligible to apply for up to 12 months of practical training (paid employment in your field of study).
- Your spouse and minor dependent children may obtain F-2 visas to enter the United States, but may not work under this visa status. It is possible to be a student under F-2 status, but a full-time student who wishes to work must change to F-1 status.
- You are legally eligible to apply for a change in your visa status to any other status for which you may qualify.

Questions about Visa Status?

Please contact the International Students and Scholars Office for more information regarding visa status. In addition to your contacts at Johnson, this important university resource will be a source of information and assistance to you throughout your time at Cornell.

Contact:

International Students and Scholars Office
B-50 Caldwell Hall
Cornell University
Phone: 607 255-5243
Fax: 607 255-2778
www.isso.cornell.edu

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