

Welcome to tonight's webchat! Visa officers Stephanie Fitzmaurice and Alison Behling are ready to take your questions on all aspects of student visas. Fire away! :-)

carl: Hi Visa Officer, I am going to apply for F1 VISA to study for phd program in U.S. But curenly I am a J1 visa holder and it is subject to two-years home residency requirement. So I would like to know can I apply for F1 student visa in this case.

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Yes, you can! The 2-year residency does not apply to a student visa; the 2-year residency only applies to those interested in L, H1B, K non-immigrant visas, and all immigrant visas.

According to regulation, J1 visa holders to whom the 2-year residency requirement applies "are ineligible to apply for or receive an H, K, or L nonimmigrant visa (NIV), nor are they eligible for an immigrant visa (IV) or permanent residence status until they have complied with or received a waiver for the foreign residence requirement." In applying for an F-1 student visa, however, there is no concern about the 2- year requirement.

JJKK: 我是 F1 签证去学语言的， 签证时可以用中文和签证官交流吗？

Visa Officer Stephanie: This depends on what your I-20 says.

If your Form [I-20](#) indicates that proficiency in English is required for pursuing the selected course of study and that no arrangements have been made to overcome any English-language deficiency, the officer must determine whether you have the necessary proficiency.

If the school is aware of a student's lack of English proficiency and has made arrangements for the student to study English before enrolling in regular courses, then the lack of English skills is not relevant.

JJKK: I've just been refused a visa officer don't see my any material

Visa Officer Alison Behling: At the time of the interview, the officer will look at all required materials, but most of the interview comes down to the discussion between the officer and the applicant: try your best to tell your story honestly. Why do you want to study at this school? How did you find out about it? How will you pay for it? These important aspects are best covered in talking to each other, and not in paper documents. However, please don't forget to bring your I-20 and any documents on financial aid.

sophia: If I am going to pursue a PhD in an American university in 2012Fall, when will be the best time for me to apply for U.S. Student Visa? What materials do I need?

Visa Officer Stephanie: Apply early, apply right! However, we cannot issue a student visa to an applicant more than 120 days in advance of his or her studies and applicants cannot enter the United States more than 30 days in advance of the beginning of studies. In order to apply you will need an acceptance letter from your program, an I-20 issued by your university, and any information about financial aid that you will receive from the university. Please visit our website at <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/student-visas.html> for a list of other suggested documents.

cyrus: Could you tell me the applying process step by step?

Visa Officer Stephanie: Please visit the Consulate's Nonimmigrant Visa page at <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv-application-procedures.html> for a detailed step-by-step list of what you should do to apply for a student visa.

tyyhf: Will you immediately deny people's visas when you find they have a visa agent to help? Sometimes we do need somebody to help.

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Use of education agents is not a reason for denial -- we recognize that many education agents provide helpful and useful services to legitimate students. Again: please just be honest and straightforward in the interview when the visa officer asks you questions about your studies, your choice of school, and your finances. If this includes using an agent, please feel free to tell us.

Overall: we encourage all applicants to follow correct procedures and be completely honest when applying for a U.S. visa.

昕昕: 您好，我是湖北的户口，可以在广州办理学生签证吗？

Visa Officer Stephanie: Yes, you may come to Guangzhou for your visa interview even if you have a Hubei registration, as long as the wait time for a nonimmigrant visa appointment is shorter in Guangzhou than at the Embassy in Beijing, which is in your Consular district.

徐伟 2: 你好！留学最大岁数是几岁啊？谢谢

Visa Officer Alison Behling: There is no age limit for studying abroad in the United States -- as long as you have applied to a legitimate school program and have a valid I-20 at the interview, that's what matters. Good luck!

Michelle: How about the dressing rules on the visa interview day? Is there any dressing forbidden or unsuitable for the interview? Thanks a million!

Visa Officer Alison Behling: There are no "rules" on how to dress (or how not to dress) on the visa interview day, and nothing is forbidden. However: use your best judgment, present yourself with respect and courtesy, and dress nicely but comfortably -- you may be waiting for awhile through the whole process.

cyrus: where can i check the school information such as the strong field of the school, the fees?

Visa Officer Stephanie: I suggest you visit Education USA's website <http://www.educationusachina.com/>, which has a detailed guide about how to choose a school and also some links to other pages where you can search for a school by the type of program you are interested in.

A: I'm a senior high 1 student in Shenzhen.If succeed in applying a US university in senior 3,when should I prepare for the passport?And what requirment it has?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: As long as, at the time of the visa interview, your passport has at least six months' validity on it, you are fine.

泡泡: Hi, my parents applied for immigration to America in 2005 because my aunt and grandma are living in America. They submitted my application as the minor applicant. We have not received any decision for the immigration application. Can I apply for a f1 student visa? Thank you!

Visa Officer Stephanie: Yes, you are welcome to apply for a student visa. A number of applicants who have relatives in the U.S. have successfully received student visas in the past. The most important factor for the visa officer will be your intention to go to the United States to study. You should be honest about the fact that you have relatives in the U.S., and just because you do have family members there does not mean your visa will be denied.

cy1314: Hello officer, I'm 12 years old and I want to go to study in the US, can my parents go to interview on my behalf? or do I have to come to interview by myself?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Our general policy states that applicants younger than 14 years old do not have to be personally present at the time of a non-immigrant visa interview. However, it is up to the individual visa officer to choose whether or not he or she wants to call in that applicant and interview them in person. As a student, no matter what your age, it is best to be prepared to come in for an interview by yourself.

Cissy: 你好我想问一下，是否能够获得留学签证最主要的参考因素有哪些，例如是资产、学生学习能力等？

Visa Officer Stephanie: The most important criteria for a student visa are whether or not the visa officer believes you have been accepted to a real school, you are truly going to the U.S. to study, you and your parents are able to pay the tuition for your studies, and you plan to leave the U.S. after your studies.

Yiming: How can I help my daughter to get her visa for middle school? Can she learn in a public school?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: U.S. regulations state that only international students at the high school level may attend public school, and only if the family has the money to pay back the local education agency the full cost of one year of high school study in that district -- and this is limited to 12 months. For students up through 8th grade (elementary and middle school), only private schools are available to international students. The large majority of our student visa applicants up through and including high school are applying to private schools.

jack: 您好，请问签证官，递交材料是等到签证官要什么我再交什么，还是面签时谈到什么问题时我主动递交有关材料？

Visa Officer Alison Behling: The I-20 form that the school sends you is the most important form for the interview -- please do hand the visa officer this form right away, with your passport and application form. Otherwise, please hold on to all other documents until the visa officer specifically asks to see them. If we want them, we will ask! The discussion between the officer and the applicant is more important than

many forms, and the time for each interview is short, so we would rather focus on talking directly to the applicant.

jack: Hello sir ,I apply F1 ,if I do not understand what the visa officer say ,can I ask him to use chinese ?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Stephanie answered a similar question earlier in the webchat; please refer to her answer. (Basically: it depends on what the school indicates on your I-20 form, so make sure you know what that says!)

eve: 签证官您好！我是 F1 签证的家长。请问我女儿的签证 3 月底到期，但那时她还在美国读书，我应该安排她圣诞假期回来重新签证吗？但是圣诞节你们要放假。她的圣诞假期只有 12 天。请问我们应该怎么续签以完成美国的学业？谢谢！

Visa Officer Stephanie: Your daughter can renew her visa while she is home for the Christmas holidays. She can make an appointment for an interview or use our dropbox service through the Citic bank. The consulate will only be closed for 2 days at the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

an: as a transfer student how can i let visa officer know i am a transfer student. if university did not give me any evidence

Visa Officer Alison Behling: First, before the interview, try to get in touch with an official or a professor at the U.S. school who is familiar with you and with this transfer program over e-mail: if you can bring in a short e-mail exchange explaining that you are in a transfer program, that will help make things clearer. Then, at the time of the interview, let the visa officer know that you are a transfer student; explain your program, and how your current Chinese studies and future U.S. studies fit together, as clearly as you can.

cyrus: I got a master degree in biochemistry and molecular biology in China, which institute or state would you recommend that would be more suitable for me?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: We at the Consulate do not recommend or favor any specific schools or states over others.

玥: 我是准备 F1 二签的 会不会影响签证？

Visa Officer Stephanie: The visa officer will know that you have been refused before, so you should be honest about this. There is no time restriction on resubmitting an application after a refusal. During your visa interview, we will want to know how your situation has changed since your last interview, so be prepared to explain the answer to this question.

cyrus: I got a master degree in biochemistry and molecular biology in China, which institute or state would you recommend that would be more suitable for me?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Stephanie addressed a similar question earlier. Please refer to Education USA's website <http://www.educationusachina.com/>.

cyrus: Are the tuition fees vary from school?

Visa Officer Stephanie: Yes, the tuition fees do vary from school to school. As a general rule, community colleges and public universities tend to be cheaper than private colleges and universities. You can visit the websites of any schools that you are interested in to learn more about their tuition and fees.

Gwyn: Hi! Due to the time difference, I have to leave me question earlier. I have been stayed in States for one and a half year by change of status from B2 to F1. Now I really want to visit my family during X'mas. What should I do to apply my F1 visa compare to the normal process. In other words, do I need to provide any other special documents? And will my status affect my application of F1 visa? Thank you!

Visa Officer Alison Behling: You would go through the normal F1 process, outlined on our website. This would include an interview in person at a Consulate or Embassy.

Echo: My nephew was rejected for his F1 visa today without given any reason. I don't think this is fair to him. How can he find out the reason for which he was rejected? Can he re-apply? If he re-apply, how long does he have to wait before he can reapply? Will be a less chance for him to be granted the visa if he re-apply due to previous rejection? Is an aunt (father's sister) considered a family member? Is it true that having a relative like aunt in US will keep him from being granted for his F1 visa? Thank you for your time!

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Stephanie addressed the first half of your question earlier: there is no specific amount of time that applicants must wait before reapplying -- however, it is best to wait until the applicant can show that there is a significant change in circumstances since the prior refusal. In addition, United States law is designed to insulate the decisions in visa cases from outside influences. An applicant can influence a reversal of a prior denial only through presentation of new convincing evidence of strong ties.

frankie: I'm so glad to see Guangzhou consulate offer this exchange opportunity for us to post our questions here. After those heavy paperwork and long time wait, sometimes, visa interview comes to be the nightmare and hurdle to the states. I believe that ,as an individual, our judgement of the matter would be always affected by this person's stereotype,mood, work attitude or habit and so on. So how could you guarantee that every visa officer would follow those generalor immigration law and rule to set the correct decision on it? Esppecially, during some peak period. Thank you!

Visa Officer Alison Behling: All visa officers try their best to apply the relevant laws objectively during all interviews -- no matter what time of year. Our training emphasizes this point.

eve: 谢谢 Visa Officer Stephanie! 我女儿圣诞假期回来通过中信银行递交签证申请, 有没有加急申请? 需时多少天可以拿到签证?

Visa Officer Stephanie: Thank you for your question. Typically, processing for all visas takes 2-3 days.

斌: 那好吧、预约签证需要什么资料?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: To make the appointment, we need the CITIC bank receipt number, your passport number, and your full name. For further information, please check our website.

fionayu: i am now 26 years old. and i got my bachelor degree in south korea. then i came back china and found a job. 2 years past i want to continue to study. so i applicated F1 Visa to USA for a Master degree. do u think if i could pass the Visa or be denied. because of age?

Visa Officer Stephanie: You are welcome to apply for a student visa at any age. The visa officer will be most concerned with whether or not you are truly going to the U.S. to study. He or she will want to know if: you were accepted to a real school, have the money to pay for the study, are prepared for the course of study, and you plan to leave the U.S. after your studies.

Gina: 请问现在美国留学 财产证明需要多少?死期还是活期?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: There is no specific amount of money that you must have in any one bank account, and it doesn't matter what kind of deposit or account it is -- what we are most interested in is you and your family's overall financial situation: who is paying for your tuition? Are the people paying for your tuition employed with steady salaries over many years? Do you own houses or other property or assets?

Jim: Hi, I am going to take the interview tomorrow, I have already got acceptance from the university and a new I-20, and I have all the requirements that are shown on the official website. Do I need to do anything else for the interview?

Visa Officer Stephanie: Hi, Jim, thank you for checking our website. If you have your I-20 and everything else listed on the website, then it sounds like you should have what you need for the interview.

amy lee: HI,I'm going to apply for futher education in US 3 years later,and before that I hope to have a back-pack tour on my own to learn about America beforehand, in this case, is there any chance that I can apply for a B1/B2 visas?thank you so much!

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Yes, you can certainly apply for a B1/B2 visa before an F1 visa -- many students do with the purpose of traveling to the United States for something other than full-time study before they begin their education.

Aimo: I have already applied visa for F4。 can I apply visa for F1? Thanks

Visa Officer Stephanie: Aimo, you are welcome to apply for an F1 student visa. A number of applicants who have relatives in the U.S. and have applied for an immigrant visa have successfully received student visas. The most important factor for the visa officer will be your intention to go to the United States to study. You should be honest about the fact that you have relatives in the U.S., and just because you do have family members there does not mean your visa will be denied.

magicice: If I've been to America before, does it make any sense to my visa in the future? Is that a good influence or bad? Or I've been to any other countries before, does it make sense?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: In the case of student visas, the most important factor is whether or not you are a legitimate intending student. If you have traveled to the US in the past and used that visa correctly, that is in your favor.

Jim: Thanks for answering my first question. My passport will be expired in 2013, can i apply for a 4-year visa because i will take college courses in next 4 years in the US

Visa Officer Stephanie: Jim, at this time, due to visa reciprocity rules, we are only able to issue one-year student visas, so you would need to apply for a new visa if you come home after one year of study in the U.S.

austin: Can I extend my student visa in the U.S.? If yes, where should I go to have it extended?

Visa Officer Stephanie: Austin, as long as you maintain your student status and you do not plan to leave the U.S., you do not need to extend or renew your visa, even if the expiration date has already passed. If you do travel to any other countries, including China, you will need to make an appointment and apply for a new F1 visa.

Jamie: hello, officer, does the sponsor must be my parent (father or mother)? If the sponsor is my aunt (my mother's sister), does it will be permit?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: The financial sponsor can be anyone -- parents, grandparents, other family members are all fine. Again, please be honest and upfront with the visa officer at the time of the interview about how you will pay your tuition.

rachel: visa office : 我的儿子取得的是 I-20 留学生，他是不是必须要回国办理续签在 I-20 表的期限内即使他的护照到期了？

Visa Officer Stephanie: If your son's passport expires while he is in the U.S. studying, he does not have to return to China to get a new passport. He can obtain a new passport from the nearest Chinese consulate or embassy. His U.S. visa will still be valid, even if it is in his old, expired passport. When he travels, he should carry his new passport and his old, expired passport that has his U.S. visa in it.

Cissy: 你好我想问一下， 是否能够获得留学签证最主要的参考因素有哪些， 例如是资产、 学生学习能力等？

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Both factors -- the student's intent to study, and the student's financial ability to pay for his or her program -- play important roles in the visa interview. Be prepared to discuss and address both.

sharon: I am a student who applied for F1 student visa. But I didn't get the visa successfully. I don't know if the policy of visa application is stricter than before. And if I plan to appoint the next visa, what should I do? How can I get the visa? Thanks for your help.

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Our visa application policy process has not changed: the criteria for obtaining a student visa are the same as before. If you plan to apply again for a visa, please be ready to tell the officer how YOUR own situation has changed from before.

Jim: Now I am transferring from language school to college, so I have to get the interview. is it right that I don't need to have interview when I renew my visa without changing schools?

Visa Officer Stephanie: Jim, that is a good question. You are correct that if you want to get another visa of the same type, and you have not changed schools, then you do not have to come for a visa interview. You can use the Consulate's CITIC dropbox service instead. See <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/drop-off-service.html> for more information.

Elaine: Hello, Officer, we want to send my 11-year-old son to US for elementary school. Is it possible that I can accompany him there for his study? If yes, what kind of visa I should apply? Thanks.

Visa Officer Stephanie: Elaine, thank you for your question. It is not possible for you to accompany your son to live fulltime in the U.S. while he is studying. However you are welcome to apply for a B1/B2 visa in order to go with him to get settled in or for other short visits.

Jack: hi sir ,I do a resume by myself ,is it useful? Does the visa officer see it?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: All graduate students should prepare a resume or CV and bring it with them to the interview. For more information about this and other documents, please refer to our website: <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/student-visas.html>

"...Detailed information about your past academic and professional experience, including a complete list of all publications to which you have contributed. "

Joe: If I have no problem to communicate with the officer when visa interview, but my oral English is not so good on pronunciation and grammar, will this problem make me be refused?

Visa Officer Stephanie: Joe, it is not necessary to have perfect English for the visa interview. You should try your best, and during the interview, we are not going to evaluate your English grammar. If you try your best to express yourself in English, it may show the visa officer that you are serious about your intention to go to the United States to study.

ELLEN: 如果想要去美国进行留学，那么需要至少提前多久准备，准备的事宜有哪些，可以在哪里看到相关的资料呢？

Visa Officer Stephanie: Ellen, please visit the Consulate's Nonimmigrant Visa Unit's website <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv-application-procedures.html> for a detailed list of what you should do to prepare for a visa interview.

rachel: 签证官你好：我的儿子在美国密苏里哥伦比亚留学，他的签证明年 6 月 18 日到期。我想知道我的儿子可不可不用回国，他把 I-20 表格和他的护照寄回来，我们帮他递交续签证？谢谢！

Visa Officer Alison Behling: As long as your son stays in the United States in student status, he does not have to leave the country -- as long as the student enters the US before the visa expires, he or she is "in status." However, if your son leaves the U.S. after the date of expiration on his visa, he will have to return in person to reapply for a new visa or use the CITIC drop box system from China.

usa: 工作 2 年后再申请留学比毕业生直接去留学要难些吧？谢谢

Visa Officer Stephanie: If you apply for a student visa after working for a few years, the visa officer will look at the same criteria as for students who are applying for a visa while they are still students. The visa officer may also ask you how your job relates to your proposed field of study and what your future work plans are.

sky: 我儿子准备明年春季去美国留学，大概要提前多久预约申请？

Visa Officer Alison Behling: We recommend that all students apply at least 2 to 3 months before their educational program starts--"Apply Early Apply Right."

eve: 非常感谢您 Visa Officer Stephanie！我女儿在圣诞假期回来再次申请 F1 签证时，需要再提供什么资料？谢谢！也就是说我可以帮她提前预约 12 月份的面签的时间对吗？

Visa Officer Stephanie: Eve, please visit our website <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv-application-procedures.html> to learn more about what documents to prepare and also how to make an appointment. It is possible for one person to make an appointment on behalf of someone else, so yes, you can make an appointment for your daughter.

rachel: 我的儿子是 I-20 表，我想知道他是否可以不回国续签在 I-20 期限内？

Visa Officer Alison Behling: No: as long as a student enters the U.S. to begin their study program before their student visa expires, then that student can stay in the U.S. until he or she graduates or leaves that study program. There is nothing that says the student must return to China.

usa: Hi Officer Stephanie, i was wondering what I-20(what mentioned here many times) stands for? :P

Visa Officer Stephanie: That is a good question. The I-20 is a form that accredited schools, colleges, and universities in the U.S. issue after a person has been accepted to study at their educational institution. So the I-20 form is a student's proof that they have been accepted to an accredited educational institution in the United States.

MISS FNLY 2: 你好，我想问一下，我弟弟两三个月左右拿到美国 DVC 学校的录取通知书的，可是两次面签都失败了，第一次是问了几个问题就拒签了，第二次一看了他的峰份证之后，没问任何问题就拒签了，我们一直都不明白，为什么不问任何问题就拒签了，这是什么意思？

Visa Officer Alison Behling: For more information, you are welcome to send an e-mail to: guangzhounivi@state.gov. We cannot give direct and specific answers to this question at this time.

Jim: hi, when I check the my SEVIS fee status, it showed I have paid. But I got a new I-20, don't I need to pay it again?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Hi Jim! For specific questions on SEVIS fees, please see the following website: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq.htm>

frankie: Hi, Alison. Thanks for your answer to the question I posted. There's rare questions about F2 visa interview questions. I've got my F1 visa couples of months before. However, my wedding plan has to put off my travel schedule to the states. Could I apply my spouse right now? or I have to enroll in the school first, then apply F2 visa? One more question, What aspect my wife should pay attention to when she goes through the interview? Any specific documents she has to prepare or present? Thanks a lot!

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Hi Frankie! The spouse of an F1 or J1 can apply for an F2/J2 visa at any time, including at the same time as the F1/J1 student -- the student does ****not**** need to be enrolled in the school first. For F2's and J2's, it is important to demonstrate the validity of your relationship to the F1 or J1 student. There are a few documents that help support this relationship, such as marriage certificates and photos. For more information, please see our website: <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/niv-dependents-visas.html>

Anki 3: Hello, I am currently studying in United States under F-1 visa. I am graduating on Feb 1st, 2012 with a bachelor's degree. I am applying for GIA, Gemological Institute of America which course starts in June, 2012. GIA requires a M-1 visa. I am planning to apply OPT during the gap from Feb 1st 2012 to May 2012 for an internship. And I will also apply for another OPT after finishing the study in GIA, which course ends in Feb, 2013. I heard that OPT is only given out under one degree. And with "same educational level" I can not get two OPTs. I am wondering if this is the issue and how is the government considering "same educational level"? Does apply to my situation? Thank you very much!

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Hi Anki 3! This is a good but very specific question. General aspects of the OPT program can be found at the US Customs and Immigration Service website, such as here: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnnextoid=9a3d3dd87aa19110VgnVCM1000004718190aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=68439c7755cb9010VgnVCM10000045f3d6a1RCRD>

Many individual schools also address OPT issues on their own websites. We advise that you check with your current and future school officials to find out more. Thanks!

Jack: hello Visa Officer Alison Behling,i want to enter a high school the US.I do not like 高考 in china .is it easy to get the visa ?I get the offer and I-20.what should i prepare any more ?

Visa Officer Alison Behling: Hi Jack! Congratulations on your offer to study in the US! As we have answered earlier this evening, all of the steps in preparation for the visa interview are on our website here: <http://guangzhou.usembassy-china.org.cn/student-visas.html>. Good luck, and please apply at least 2-3 months in advance!