



Student Visas and U.S. Higher Education

A U.S. Consulate General, Hyderabad Facebook Chat, held on July 20, 2012 from
02:00pm – 04:00pm

Facebook Chat Transcript

Student: How do we evaluate a university that matches our profile exactly? I have followed USNEWS.COM, please could you post any link, which has some rankings about universities. Though I am a credible student who got refused! Basically I got refused for applying to a university which is low graded. The Visa Officer presumed that I approached a consultancy and that I am a potential immigrant.

U.S. Vice Consul: *We'll keep in mind that it's the officer who determines if you are a credible student, not you! As for evaluating universities, the best advice I can give you is that it takes a lot of hard work. There are thousands of universities in the US to choose from. We see 100s of students and many choose to apply to the same universities. I don't have the exact statistics, but there are probably 25-30 universities that the vast majority of students apply to. When we see students applying to the same universities again and again, we tend to think that consultants are steering students toward those universities.*

Student: Does Spring intake have a low visa acceptance rate?

U.S. Vice Consul: *See my earlier response: We will give visas to qualified, credible student every day of the year. We do not "run out" of student visas in July! There are no quotas. If your university starts in September, then August is the perfect time to apply. Good luck!*

Student: My interview went like this:

Me: Good morning Sir.

VO: So you've passed in the year 2010

Me: Yes Sir.

VO: So you've applied for Texas A&M, Kingsville

Me: Yes Sir.

VO: Why this university?

Me: phenomenal research is being going on in the field of Fluid Mechanics which is my field of interest (Fumbled all the way, the VO gave me two strange looks) it has good research and lab facilities to support this field. The professors like Dr. Abdul Razaak and Dr. Yousri Elkabsabji have good hands on experience in this field. My interest matches theirs.

Vo: What are you going to do after Ms?

Me: I'll come back to India and work in a MNC like Mahindra or Tata Group. If I'm given an opportunity I'd like to do my PhD.

VO: what other universities have you applied?

Me: University of Houston, Wichita State University, and IIT Chicago

VO: Sorry I cannot approve your Visa.

Please can you tell me where I went wrong?

US Vice Consul: *I have had almost this exact same interview hundreds and hundreds of times. Where you went wrong is that you did nothing to distinguish yourself from the 100s of similar students. To be perfectly blunt, I don't care that Dr Abdul Razaak and Dr. Yousri Elkabsabji have good hands on experience in this field. Is that really why you chose Kingsville? Every single student we interview wants to work at an MNC. Is that really what you aspire to do? Do something that distinguishes you from the crowd! Tell me that you want to design a 3-D video game or that you chose Kingsville because you want to go visit a cowboy ranch or that you're excited to take a course on American literature. PLEASE don't give us the same rehearsed speech that I hear from so many students who can't really explain why they want to study in the US.*

Student: Thanks for F1 Friday's! Does scheduling a visa interview in August reduce the chances of acceptance? Please reply so that I can plan whether to apply for Fall 2012 or Spring 2013. Actually my University is commencing in September?

US Vice Consul: *There is no such thing as coming late (in the year) to a visa interview. We will give visas to qualified, credible student every day of the year. We do not "run out" of student visas in July! There are no quotas. If your university starts in September, then August is the perfect time to apply. Good luck!*

Student: I completed my graduation with 58.15% with zero backlogs. Will I get a visa to go to the U.S. to study MS?

US Vice Consul: *Only the officer who interviews you at the Consulate can tell you if you will get the visa or not. But since you said earlier that you are interested in going to the US for work, then I for one, already doubt that you are a credible student visa applicant!*

Student: Does Distance education matter in rejection of F1 Visa?

US Vice Consul: *Can you clarify? Are you asking if it is ok to do a distance education course while in the US? For example you live in New York, but your university is in San Francisco, so you take classes online?*

Student: Is it okay, if I have graduate through a distance learning course in my home county and apply for a full time Masters in the US?

US Vice Consul: *Oh I see. Well, you wouldn't be disqualified for a visa just because you took a distance learning course. The officer might have some questions about how the course worked or how serious an academic program it was, but if you are otherwise a qualified and credible student, the distance learning course shouldn't be problematic.*

Student: My brother and I are planning to apply for F1 together, well he completed his education through distance learning...I already have a B1/B2 10yrs multiple entry will be expiring in 2021, now when I'm applying for a F1 this fall, will my B1/B2 still stand valid or will it be cancelled if I'm rejected a F1? I

haven't travelled yet to the US even after getting my B1/B2 stamped and it's been almost an year I go the stamping done, now will this be an issue?

US Vice Consul: *If you don't get the F1, it won't affect your B1/B2. Also, if you get your F1 visa, you will still get to keep the B1/B2 through 2021. As long as you don't misuse your F1 visa by working illegally or something like that!*

Student: Thank You :-)

Student: I have got an admission for this fall 2012 to pursue my Masters in Mechanical Engineering at TEXAS A&M KINGSVILLE UNIVERSITY. But I have been rejected visa stating that i might be a potential immigrant at Chennai. Being my first ever interview i was nervous when i stood in front of the Visa Officer and fumbled a few times. I've passed out on June 2010, with Academics 65%. After my undergraduate I wanted to do my Masters so i was preparing for GRE and TOEFL and gave my tests during 2011. At the same time I didn't want to waste my time so i started working in a social organization full time since June 2010. By the time i got all my score cards it was October 2011. My GRE score is 1130 and TOEFL is 85. Also I was giving home tuitions for my juniors and friends and was helping them out in their Engineering Drawing subject during this time. My Financial documents are all strong having more than double the amount required for pursuing my Masters. What possible changes can I make in my profile and re-apply for my visa and get through? How can I convince the Officer that I am just going there to Study and will come back? How best can I answer in the short time? Does changing the place have any effect?

US Vice Consul: *What possible changes can you make? Well, you're stuck with your 65%, but there's nothing preventing you from studying for the GRE and TOEFL (and in my opinion, you are not wasting time by doing this!) and try to improve your scores. And if you get a higher score, maybe you can apply to a more prestigious university. You can also practice with friends and family so you are more prepared for the interview. You won't have much time, so you will need to make a good impression right away. Just try to be as cool as a cucumber; otherwise the results might be catastrophic! Good luck to you.*

Student: You reject most of the people based on immigration rules that "he/she doesn't return to India after completion of their Masters". I agree with you but the rule should be common to all the people in India. Why should you grant 5 years visa for some people even though MS is for just 2 years. Haven't you encouraged those people to work after completion of their Masters? Isn't it contradicting your immigration rules?

US Vice Consul: *Keep in mind that not everyone graduates in 2 yrs. Many students stay in the US after graduation to do OPT which is perfectly legal to do. Student visas are also used by PhD students who might stay 5 yrs or more. We want to make it easy to complete your masters or do your OPT without having you come back to India for a new visa every 2 years.*

Student: The only thing which can get you people visa is by somehow convincing them (not the visa officer, but the consulate) that you have sufficient money. For it you can borrow money from relatives and friends and from whomsoever you can. Start the money accumulation from 1 year to be safe and tell the relatives/friends to transfer random amounts and never to transfer round figures! Make the amount in

your or your dad's bank account approx close to 10-15lacs and it should work well. If you do this I am sure that you can get a visa. Again if the actual reason for your visa rejection is quota exhaustion, then nothing can help you. Just apply later of in the next quarter before the student visas expire.

US Vice Consul: *Oh dear, where are you getting this information?? Where to begin... for starters, having sufficient funds is only ONE aspect of determining if you get the student visa. Even if you have 10 crore in the bank, you won't get a visa if you have a 53% with 27 backlogs. And there are no "quotas" for student visas and student visas do not "expire" every quarter. We will happily give student visas to as many qualified, credible students that we can find. Finally, the most important thing is to be truthful with the officer during the interview. We review bank records carefully to see if the accounts are genuine.*

Student: I have a good academic record (no backlogs), good GRE and TOEFL scores. I want to do my Masters from the U.S. but I have a question. My uncle filed an immigration petition (F4) for my dad. Will this affect my chances of getting a student visa?

US Vice Consul: *Sorry, I thought I had already responded to your question, but I guess I didn't. Well, it all depends! If the officer believes that you are a qualified and credible student who will study hard and finish his degree, then it shouldn't be a problem. If, however, the officer thinks you will just get to the US... to live with your Uncle and work at the gas station down the street from his house, then it will be a problem! Your job is to show the officer through your academic performance and answers during the interview that you are a qualified and credible student.*

Student: Thank you for replying. The only intention I have is to complete my Masters. Can my Uncle sponsor me for my education in the U.S.?

US Vice Consul: *Yes, your uncle can help you pay for your university costs.*

Student: I have one doubt. Do any of the officers write a log to give or not to give a visa to a person who was rejected in last interview?

US Vice Consul: *I'm not sure I understand your question-- we do see the notes that the officer took during your previous interviews. Is that what you're asking?*

Student: Yes officer. Does he write to issue visa or not if the person comes next time?

US Vice Consul: *I do still not understand your question entirely, but let me try this. Every interview is different. Every officer can see what the previous officers wrote from earlier interviews. For every interview, every officer is able to make the final decision if the visa is approved or not. HOWEVER, if an applicant has been refused 1, 2, 3, 4 times before, the officer will probably agree with the previous officers and refuse again, UNLESS there are very clear signs of improvement that shows the applicant is now a qualified and credible student.*

Student: Does it affect the chances of getting the student visa, if the elder brother is the sponsor who is working in the United States of America and a Green card holder. Thank you.

US Vice Consul: *Well, it all depends! If the officer believes that you are a qualified and credible student who will study hard and finish his degree, then it shouldn't be a problem. If, however, the officer thinks you will just get to the US to live with your brother and work at the gas station down the street from his*

house, then it will be a problem! Your job is to show the officer through your academic performance and answers during the interview that you are a qualified and credible student.

Student: I had my interview on the 12th of June at the Hyderabad Consulate and was given 221(g). I still have not received my passport. If my visa does not come before the orientation day and comes late then when i go for my higher studies next spring/fall do i need to visit the consulate or just receive a new i-20 from the university? Sir/Madam any possibility to know how long will it take more?

US Vice Consul: *You would need to get a new I-20. I know waiting for cases in 221(g) status is frustrating, but unfortunately there's no way to know exactly how long it will take. Hope you get some news soon.*

Student: I have an I-20 for Masters from Stevens's institute, NJ for Fall'12 and I have booked my visa slot for next week. I would want a clarification on this: I have a France Visa for studying Masters in France and I am supposed to leave from Hyderabad on 7th of August. But, my preference among both countries is USA, so, if the VO puts my case under 221G, then would I have an option of asking the VO to hand over my passport back to me and once if my Visa is approved for US, then can I get it stamped? Because, if I am put under 221g and if my passport gets held up then I fear I may not end up with either US nor France (as France was my back up option). Thanks in advance.

US Vice Consul: *Bonjour! You can request the officer to give you your passport after the interview if your case requires more work (221G). You can also contact the Consulate after the interview and request your passport be returned to you. Good luck with the interview-- it's always nice to have options!*

Student: I am a citizen of Hyderabad and a graduate and my issue is that I want to visit the U.S. and work to earn some money. I do not have any relatives and friends there to guide me or for a reference. Please can you suggest what I can do to acquire a visa?

US Vice Consul: *If you are interested in working in the US, a student visa is not for you!*

Student: I have an admission to join next September but I would be in Paris till then for another course. If I am applying for a student visa in Paris, can I show proof my funds like the loans and deposits with Indian banks?

US Vice Consul: *WOW, I'm jealous that you get to spend some time in Paris! You can apply for a visa there, but there is a very good chance that the officer will tell you that he cannot approve your visa since he cannot adequately assess your ties to India. It's up to you, but it might be best to apply for the student visa when you are back in India.*

Student: Thanks, but for an option if I would pay the whole tuition fee and get the receipt from the university and show the living expenses in my local French account, will that be ok?

US Vice Consul: *Only the officer in Paris can make that determination. I would caution you though, about paying for the whole tuition fee-- what if you don't get the visa?*

Student: Is going through a consultancy, affect the chances of getting a visa?

US Vice Consul: This is an excellent question. Going through a consultancy is legal, but we do not recommend that you do this! It's best to do the research yourself and find the right university, rather than have a consultant tell you what universities to apply to. HOWEVER-- it is VERY important that if you do use a consultant, and an officer asks you if you did, then please tell the truth. You will NOT be refused on that basis alone. But, it will make us wonder if you are truly a serious student who did the necessary hard work to apply to a university.

Student: I applied for a visa to go to Florida institute of technology (FIT) and got approved. But now I got admission into my desired subject, 'Computers' in Texas A&M University Kingsville (TAMUK). So I would like to pursue my masters in TAMUK. What will be the best option to transfer my school? FIT does not allow the students to transfer unless they complete 1 semester in FIT. Should I go for a re-stamping of visa? Then my query is that, if I apply for TAMUK visa will my visa be rejected along with the FIT visa i.e. will my both visas be rejected? It will be very helpful if you could kindly clarify my doubt. .

US Vice Consul: *You are faced with an interesting dilemma. You will have to decide if you want to transfer or not after one semester. You could apply again for an F1 to go to Kingsville, but it is very possible an officer would determine that you do not qualify for that visa. This is why we always recommend that you wait until you get all your admits, rather than come for an interview after your first admit. Good luck to you!*

Student: I have a question regarding F1 visa. I have completed my graduation in 2011, I have 1 year experience in BPO, I want to do MBA in my dream country USA, can tell me what is the procedure to apply in US universities. And i am eligible or not for F1 visa.

US Vice Consul: *I hope your dream comes true! A good place to start when you are thinking about studying in the US is the US-India Educational Foundation website (<http://www.usief.org.in/Study-in-the-US/Graduate-Study.aspx>). You can find lots of information about the application process there. I don't know if you're eligible for an F1 visa-- only the officer that interviews you can determine that!*

Student: Is there any limit for applying universities after taking GRE or TOEFL tests?

US Vice Consul: *You are welcome to apply to as many universities as you want after taking the GRE and TOEFL.*

Student: Could you please throw some light on what is OPT? I mean the complete information on what it is and how a student can utilize this period?

US Vice Consul: *OPT is optional practical training. It allows international students to stay in the US and work after they have completed their degree, usually for about a year. You also have the option of CPT*

(curricular practical training), which you can do while you study, but you need to have completed one year of study. In theory, the work you do should be related to your degree.

US Vice Consul: *If you are interested in this, you should check with your university.*

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