

May 14, 2014

Individuals may have more than one type of non-immigrant visas

Question: *I plan to apply for a student visa in order to study my undergraduate degree in the U.S. If I apply for a student visa, will my B1/B2 tourist visa be cancelled? Will my student visa also allow me to work in the U.S. while I'm studying?*

Non-immigrant visas are issued depending on the purpose of travel and, as such, an individual may have more than one type of non-immigrant visa valid at one time. If an individual has a valid B1/B2 tourist visa but wants to study in the U.S., they will need to apply for an F-1 or M-1 student visa. If your student visa is approved, your tourist visa will not be cancelled.

Some students are eligible to work in the U.S. on their student visa, however, there are certain restrictions that must be abided. A student who attends classes full time (more than 12 hours per semester) is eligible to work on-campus. However, while classes are in session, a student may not work more than 20 hours per week. Special permission can be requested to work more hours when classes are not in session. In addition, a student may work full time during vacation periods, such as Christmas and summer, if the student is enrolled in and plans to attend classes the following semester.

If a student wants to work off campus, they must apply for permission from the U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS). In order to qualify, the student must meet the following criteria:

1) a full-time student for one academic year; 2) a student in good standing who will continue to take classes full-time; 3) the ability to demonstrate that the employment will not interfere with their studies; and 4) the employer submits certain documentation regarding the student's work hours and pay.

Some students may also be eligible for internships and other practical training directly related to their area of study called Optional Practical Training (OPT). Permission for OPT is also granted by USCIS.

Student visa interview appointments are available Monday through Friday at U.S. Embassy Kingston. As appointments do fill up, students are encouraged to apply for their visa early to provide ample time for visa processing. Complete information on the student visa application process is available at: http://kingston.usembassy.gov/student_visas2.html

For those interested in studying in the U.S., additional information is available at the Educational Advising office of the U.S. Embassy. To find out more about resources available or to set up an individual or group session please visit: <http://kingston.usembassy.gov/educationusa.html>