Student Visa FAQs

*43 Frequently Asked Questions about Student Visas to the **USA***

To answer questions that many Nepali students have about student visas to the United States, **USEF-Nepal** and the **United States Embassy in Nepal** have compiled this brochure. For further information and updates about student visas, please refer to the U.S. Embassy's website http://nepal.usembassy.gov and the website of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs http://travel.state.gov

HOW TO APPLY FOR A STUDENT VISA

1. **When should I apply for a student visa, and what is the waiting period for a visa appointment?**
   You should apply for a student visa as early as possible, but not more than 120 days before your I-20 reporting date. Wait times vary depending on the time of year. May to August and November to January are peak times for student visa applications. During these months, wait times can be two or three weeks. If your appointment date is after the reporting date noted on your I-20 (or DS-2019 for exchange student programs), you should notify the staff at Nabil Bank and they will provide you with an earlier appointment if possible.

2. **What is the process for applying for a student visa?**
   First, you must complete the DS-160 online application. Then, you can schedule a visa appointment at various Nabil Bank locations by paying the appropriate application fee. (Note: The application is a standard, worldwide fee; however, it may change depending on the exchange rate and the current fee schedule.) As a student, you must also pay the USD $200 SEVIS fee. To learn about how to pay the fee, you can visit http://www.fmjfee.com. For more information, please visit http://nepal.usembassy.gov.

DOCUMENTS

3. **What documents are required? (Is a police report, health report required? Do I need a 'No Objection Letter'?)**
   Please bring your original I-20 issued by the academic institution where you intend to study, all academic records (SLC, +2 certificate, etc.), and any evidence of financial resources to show that you can afford your education. The U.S. Embassy does not require police reports or medical exam results for non-immigrant (including student) visas. 'No Objection Letters' are also not a requirement of the United States.

4. **Do I have to translate my Nepali documents into English?**
   No, the Embassy does not require that your documents are translated into English.

5. **How recent should my documents be? Should I include my previous (expired) passport?**
   Financial documents should reflect the current financial standing of the sponsor. Please bring all your previous passports or travel documents with you to your interview.

6. **Are standardized test scores (such as TOEFL, SAT, GRE, and GMAT) required? Is it okay if I have taken IELTS instead of TOEFL?**
   The Consular Section does not require any standardized tests. The interviewing officer can review standardized test scores, so please include them in your documents if you have taken these exams.

7. **What documents will help demonstrate my ties to Nepal?**
   There are no specific documents required by the Embassy to judge ties to Nepal. You may bring any documents that demonstrate your social, economic and family ties to your country.

8. **Can I bring multiple I-20s to my interview?**
   Yes, you can bring all of your I-20s to the interview, but you will need to have identified and paid the USD $200 SEVIS fee for the academic institution that you are planning to attend.

9. **What are the consequences of bringing fake documents?**
   Please do not bring fake documents to your visa interview. If you bring fake documents that are material to your student visa, you risk being permanently ineligible for any type of U.S. visa and you may be turned over to the police.

BANK & SPONSOR DOCUMENTS

10. **Do I need to bring a bank statement? Can bank statements be from any bank?**
    You can bring statements from any bank or financial institution. There is no steadfast rule for bank statements, but Consular Officers prefer to see transactions for a longer period of time rather than only for a couple of days. Your financial documents must demonstrate your ability to pay for your studies in the U.S.

11. **If I have a full scholarship to attend a U.S. university, do I need to show financial documents?**
    If you have a full scholarship you still need to show that you have the funds to travel to the U.S., maintain your student

status, and afford other expenses affiliated with studying in the United States.

12. Who can be my sponsor? If my sponsor is not my parent, do I need to show information about my parents?
Anyone can be your sponsor, as long as they are willing to support you financially while you are in school. However, this sponsorship must be genuine and you should be prepared to explain why and how your sponsor will support you throughout your studies. If your sponsor is not your parent, still bring information about your family; it helps you to show your social ties and it is better to include this information in your application.

13. My sponsor does not have a bank account. How can I show that I have enough funds to cover my costs during my stay in the United States?
The interviewing officer must be convinced of the student's ability to pay for their education. The ability to pay can be demonstrated in many different ways – a bank balance is just one.

14. Does my sponsor's bank balance need to have enough funds for the entire duration of my studies?
Students applying for the F1 visa need to demonstrate their ability to afford their education for the duration of their studies. Although not required to possess complete funds for the entire duration of study at the interview, students should be prepared to show enough readily available funds to meet all expenses for the first year of study and adequate funds for each subsequent year of study.

15. My dependent will be accompanying me to the U.S. What additional documents or financial resources must I show?
If your dependent is going with you, you will need to bring evidence of your relationship to your interview. You will also have to demonstrate that you are able to afford both your studies and the living expenses of your dependent.

I-20, PASSPORT, SEVIS

16. Some of the information on my I-20 is wrong (i.e. spelling of my name, middle name is missing, date of birth). Do I need to have my college issue a new I-20 with the correct information?
Yes, the Consular Section cannot issue a visa if there are mistakes on your I-20. Please contact your school and make these changes before you apply.

17. When I apply for a student visa, how long should my passport be valid for?
Your passport should be valid for at least six months beyond your planned date of travel to the United States.

18. What is a SEVIS fee?
SEVIS stands for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. SEVIS tracks the status of applicants on student and exchange visitor visas. Visa recipients must remain in status to avoid violating the terms of their visa. For more information, please visit http://www.fmjfee.com

19. I paid my SEVIS fee for one I-20, but now I want to use a different I-20. Do I need to transfer my payment? How do I do this?
You can use the same receipt for SEVIS if you change schools. However, you will need to transfer the payment before your visa interview appointment. You should contact the school you intend to attend and ask them to amend your SEVIS record to reflect the change. For more information, please visit http://www.fmjfee.com

20. I made my visa appointment using one I-20, but now I want to apply for a visa using a different I-20. How can I make this change?
You are allowed to change your I-20 at the time of your interview. However, we strongly recommend that you apply for a visa only after you have made a decision about the university/college that you will attend. Changing your I-20 at the time of the interview can result in data errors in your application and a longer wait for your interview as the Consular Section will need to update your information. If you change your I-20, inform the Consular Section when you submit your documents. Also note that once your visa has been issued and annotated with the university or college listed on your I-20, you will need to re-apply for a new visa should you decide to attend a different university or college.

FACTORS AFFECTING VISA ISSUANCE

21. Is there a limit or quota to the number of student visas issued in a year?
No, there is no quota for student visas to the U.S. We want qualified students to study in the United States from all countries, including Nepal.

22. What are the main requirements to qualify for a student visa?
Applicants must demonstrate their ability, intent, and means to study in the United States. Furthermore, applicants must demonstrate strong ties to their native country and convince the interviewing officer that they will return after the completion of their study.

23. How do these factors affect visa issuance?

a. Applying early for a student visa
Although the Embassy recommends students apply for a visa as soon as possible (within 120 days of your I-20 reporting date) to avoid a long waiting period for a visa appointment, when you choose to apply has no bearing on your qualification for a visa.

b. Choice of college
The U.S. Embassy accepts I-20s and visa applications for all accredited education institutions in the United States. Students should be prepared to explain their choice of college and program to the interviewing officer and reasons that they are a good fit.

c. Choice of major (Also, what if I am 'undecided'?)
You may choose to study any subject, or be "undecided" while entering an undergraduate program, as long as you show your ability, intent, and means to study the subject.

d. Not receiving a scholarship
Scholarships can be very important if your family will have difficulty paying for your education and living expenses in the United States. Many schools provide tuition waivers for all international students while others provide financial aid packages for students with demonstrated need. The Embassy encourages all prospective students to plan well, apply to schools early, and investigate opportunities for financial aid through schools directly. There are no fees for applying for scholarship or financial aid in the United States. When you apply for a student visa, the Consular Officer will need to see that you can afford your fees, whether or not you have been awarded a scholarship.

e. Applying to a community college
The United States has community colleges, which offer two-year Associate's degrees. As is the case with any academic program, students applying to community colleges will need to demonstrate academic preparation and explain their choice of program and academic goals. Furthermore, they will need to demonstrate their intent and means to study in the U.S.

f. Applying to a public vs. a private college
The type of school has no bearing on your qualifications for a student visa.

g. Applying to a college that already has many Nepali students
The number of Nepali students at any particular school has no bearing on your qualifications for a student visa.

h. Applying as a transfer student
If you have a poor academic record, securing good marks at a local university and applying as a transfer student can help convince the interviewing officer that you have the ability to study in the U.S. Other factors, such as intent and means to study in the U.S. are also factors the officer considers during your interview.

i. **Applying for a <u>second</u> bachelor's or second master's**
If you have good reasons for seeking a second degree, and can convince the interviewing officer of your ability, intent, and means to study in the U.S., you will likely qualify for the visa.

j. **Having <u>siblings</u> or close relatives studying or settled in the U.S.**
As a student visa applicant, you must convince the interviewing officer that you have the ability, intent, and means to study in the U.S. The Officer also must believe that you have a residence abroad to which you intend to return after finishing your education in the U.S.

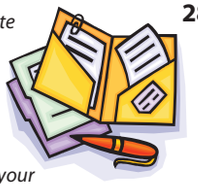
k. **Planning to <u>live with my relatives</u> in the U.S. to reduce costs**
We consider all sources of income and support when considering whether you can afford your educational expenses.

l. **<u>Gap years</u> in my education**
You must be able to demonstrate that you have the academic ability and genuine intent to study, despite gaps in your education.

m. **Having applied for the <u>DV Lottery</u>**
At the time of your student visa application, you must demonstrate that you do not have immigrant intent.

n. **Having relatives in <u>influential</u> positions**
Your application must stand on its own merits.

o. **Having a <u>letter of recommendation</u> from my school or employer**
You may choose to include any document that you feel supports your case.



p. **Coming from an <u>underprivileged</u> group in Nepal**
Consular Officers do not consider an applicant's caste or ethnicity during an interview.

q. **Having <u>disabilities</u> or health problems**
If you can convince the interviewing officer that you have the ability, intent, and means to study in the U.S., disabilities and health problems will not impact your qualification for a student visa.

r. **Taking an educational <u>loan</u> to pay for part of my education in the U.S.**
As long as you can show that you have the means to re-pay the loan without resorting to illegal employment in the U.S., this will not be counted against you.

s. **Having <u>visas to other countries</u> in my passport**
Having visas to other countries in your passport has no relevance to your qualifying for a student visa to the U.S.

INTERVIEW PROCEDURE

24. How long does an interview typically last and how do Consular Officers make a determination at the interview?
At most U.S. embassies around the world, visa interviews are approximately two minutes. However, we try to give you as much consideration as possible depending upon the volume of applicants that must be interviewed. Interviews typically range from 2 to 10 minutes in duration depending upon the case. Officers adjudicate cases according to U.S. law, which states that the applicant must demonstrate that s/he is qualified for the visa. In a student visa, this means demonstrating intent to study in the U.S., the ability to cover the cost of the study, and an intent to depart the U.S. after completing your studies.

25. After the interview, how do I know whether I qualified for a student visa? If I qualified, when will my visa be ready?
The interviewing officer will tell you whether you qualified or not at the time of the interview. If you qualified, normally your visa will be ready within 2 business days. However, some cases may take longer.

I DID NOT QUALIFY THE FIRST TIME…

26. How many times in a year can I apply for a visa? Is there an appeal process? What are my chances of receiving a visa on the second or third attempt? Shall I reapply immediately after my first visa interview? Is it better to apply with the same I-20 or a different one?
You can apply as many times you wish to with the same or different I-20s. However, we suggest that you re-apply only if your situation changes significantly. There is no appeals process. You may want to carefully consider if it is worth your time or money to apply again if there is no change in your application. Your chances of getting a visa do not increase with the number of applications you make.

27. I was not qualified for a visa and did not understand the reason. How may I find out the reason, so that my next application will be stronger?
At the time of the interview, the interviewing officer must determine if you qualify for a student visa and all applicants are provided information on their case. You will also be given a letter that explains U.S. law and overcoming immigrant intent. Students must demonstrate that they have the intent, ability and resources to study in the U.S.

I WAS ISSUED A VISA…

28. I was issued a visa for one college, but now I have received an I-20 from a different college that I would rather attend. Can I use the same visa or do I need a new one?
You cannot use this visa because it is annotated with the name of the school you had originally intended to attend. You will need to re-apply and qualify for the new school.

29. What is the length of validity of my student visa? If the duration of my studies is longer or shorter than the validity of my visa, how does this impact my stay in the U.S.?
Generally, a student visa is valid up until the I-20 program end date , but remains valid only as long as a student remains in status – enrolled at an academic institution and possessing a valid I-20. A student visa allows a student to travel to and from the United States for the full validity of the visa as long as the student is in status. This means that a student is not allowed to stay in the United States if s/he is not in status even though the visa is yet to reach its expiry date.

30. I was issued a visa to attend college last semester, but due to personal reasons I could not go to the U.S. Do I need to reapply for a visa or can I travel to the U.S. now using the same visa to attend the same college? Can I attend a different college using the same visa?
You can use the visa to go to the same college if you have a valid I-20. You should contact the Consular Section once you get your new I-20 so that we can check on your SEVIS status. Remember that if you are going for the first time, you must be going to the school annotated on the visa.

31. If I decide to transfer to a different college while I am in the U.S., do I need to get a new visa?
A new visa is not needed in order to transfer schools in the U.S. We suggest that students speak directly with their college's international students' office before transferring schools to better understand requirements.

32. I am a returning student. My visa is still valid but I am going to a different university/college now. Can I use the same visa?
If you have a valid I-20, a visa, and you have not fallen out of status, you can use the same visa to re-enter the United States even if you have changed your school.

33. I plan to pursue a higher degree in the U.S. after I finish my first course of studies. How can I extend my student visa when I am in the U.S.?
You cannot extend your visa in the U.S. If your visa expires and you are not in the U.S., you will need to apply for another visa before continuing your studies. If you are in the U.S., we suggest that students contact your college's international students' office to understand status requirements.

34. I applied for and received a tourist visa to the U.S. Can I change my tourist visa to a student visa when I am in the U.S.?
Generally, it is much better to apply for the correct type of visa before traveling to the U.S. Please visit http://travel.state.gov for additional information.

35. Does a visa guarantee me admission into the United States?
A visa does not guarantee admission into the United States. A visa is only the authorization to apply for admission. The Department of Homeland Security has the final authority to allow or deny admission to the U.S.

"I HEARD THAT…"

36. I heard that if I wear black for my interview, I won't get a visa. Is this true?
Absolutely not. You are welcome to wear any color of clothing to the interview.

37. I heard that the lady Consular Officer is really strict and I won't get a visa if she's my interviewer. Is this true?
No. Every interviewing officer gives each applicant every consideration consistent with U.S. immigration law. At the time of the interview, you must demonstrate that you intend to study; that you have the ability to maintain your student status in the U.S.; that you can afford to study in the U.S.; and that you intend to return to Nepal.

38. I heard that Consular Officers don't even look at documents before the interview. Is this true?
No. The Consular Section carefully reviews each and every case; however, interviewing officers may look at documents before calling an applicant to the window.

39. I heard that before my interview, Consular Officers have already decided whether I qualify for a visa. Is this true?
No. While documents can be helpful to your application, it is the interview that is the basis for the decision on your visa application.

40. I have a friend who applied with genuine documents and was refused and a friend who applied with fake documents and was issued a visa. Does that mean that people who apply with fake documents have a better chance of getting a visa?
The U.S. Embassy takes fraudulent documents very seriously. If you misrepresent yourself during your visa interview, you risk becoming permanently barred from entering the United States. We strongly encourage you not to use fake documents.

MORE INFORMATION

41. Where can I obtain more information about student visas?
USEF-Nepal holds 'Student Visa Information Sessions' in conjunction with the U.S. Embassy's Consular Section. Sessions are held monthly during peak student visa application seasons and are open to students with I-20s for the coming semester. These sessions are free of cost, but advance registration at USEF-Nepal is required. For further information about student visas, please visit the websites of the U.S. Embassy in Nepal http://nepal.usembassy.gov and the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs http://travel.state.gov.

42. Does the U.S. Embassy support or endorse 'visa preparation classes' offered by private educational consultancies?
The U.S. Embassy does not support or endorse 'visa preparation classes' offered by private educational consultancies. Students are advised to prepare their case by themselves or visit USEF for additional information.

43. Can I call the U.S. Embassy if I have questions specific to my case?
We hope that the answers in this FAQ will help answer your questions. Specific questions about your case are best asked at the time of your interview. You can find more information on the U.S. Embassy's website at http://nepal.usembassy.gov

APPLICATION AND INTERVIEW ADVICE from the U.S. EMBASSY

Each student at the time of the visa interview must clearly demonstrate their ability to study, genuine intent to study, and their ability to afford their education. Each student is unique and makes different choices – each interview should also be unique. Students should come prepared, not with a rehearsed speech, but to engage in a conversation about their choice of academic curriculum and institution, financial resources, and personal plans for the future.

Every student is an individual; we encourage all students to complete the applications completely and accurately and select the U.S. education that best suits your individual needs. You are responsible for the information on your application. Please remember that lying, falsifying information, or misrepresenting yourself on your application or during your interview will disqualify you for a student visa. The U.S. Embassy does not discriminate on the basis of gender, ethnicity, caste, race or religion.

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