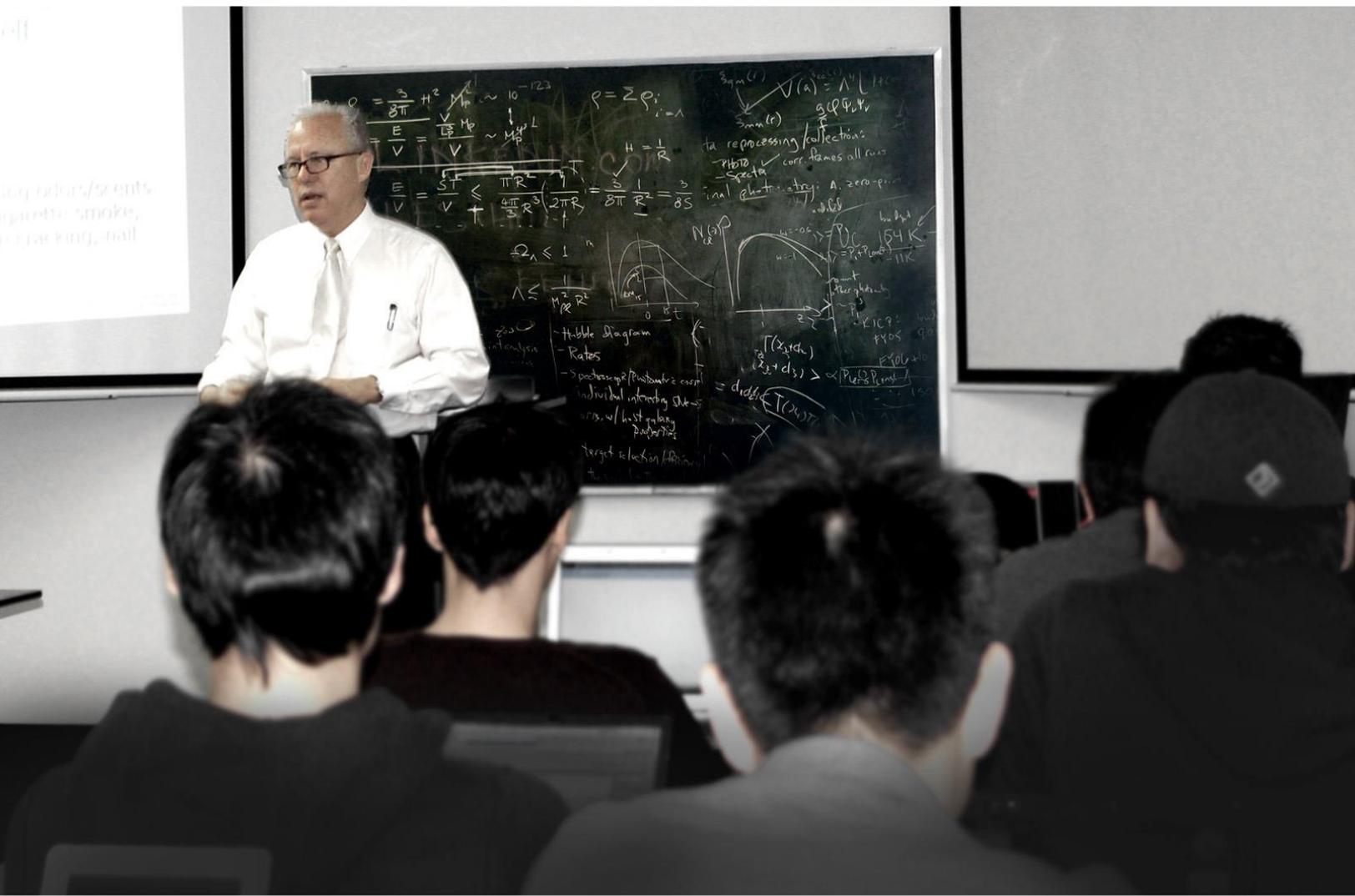


# INTERNATIONAL AMERICAN UNIVERSITY



## F-1 STUDENT HANDBOOK STUDYING IN THE UNITED STATES

2017

# GREETINGS FROM CALIFORNIA!

THIS HANDBOOK WAS DESIGNED TO HELP ANSWER ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT STUDYING ABROAD.

We will address topics such as admissions, costs, your visa interview, family, housing, studying in the U.S., rules for International Students, social life, graduation, and employment!

What compelled us to write such a guide were the struggles that our own students faced after coming here to the United States. They were not told what to expect, what to be prepared for, the hardships, or who to turn to for help. With the experiences of past students, the knowledge we possess, and this guide as an advantage, we hope to prepare you for a successful educational experience. This handbook is written in such a way to help guide you through the F-1 process in the order you will experience it.

The topics covered in each section are applicable to all those interested in joining our programs. The University welcomes all students and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, disability, gender or in any other way in its policies, practices, or procedures involving applicants, students, faculty, staff and the public. Those who would like to have an in-depth understanding of our operations to please view the University Catalog.

*If you have any questions regarding this handbook, the information it contains, or would like to speak to a university representative, please view our contact information on page 2*

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# STEP 1: ABOUT IAU

## OVERVIEW

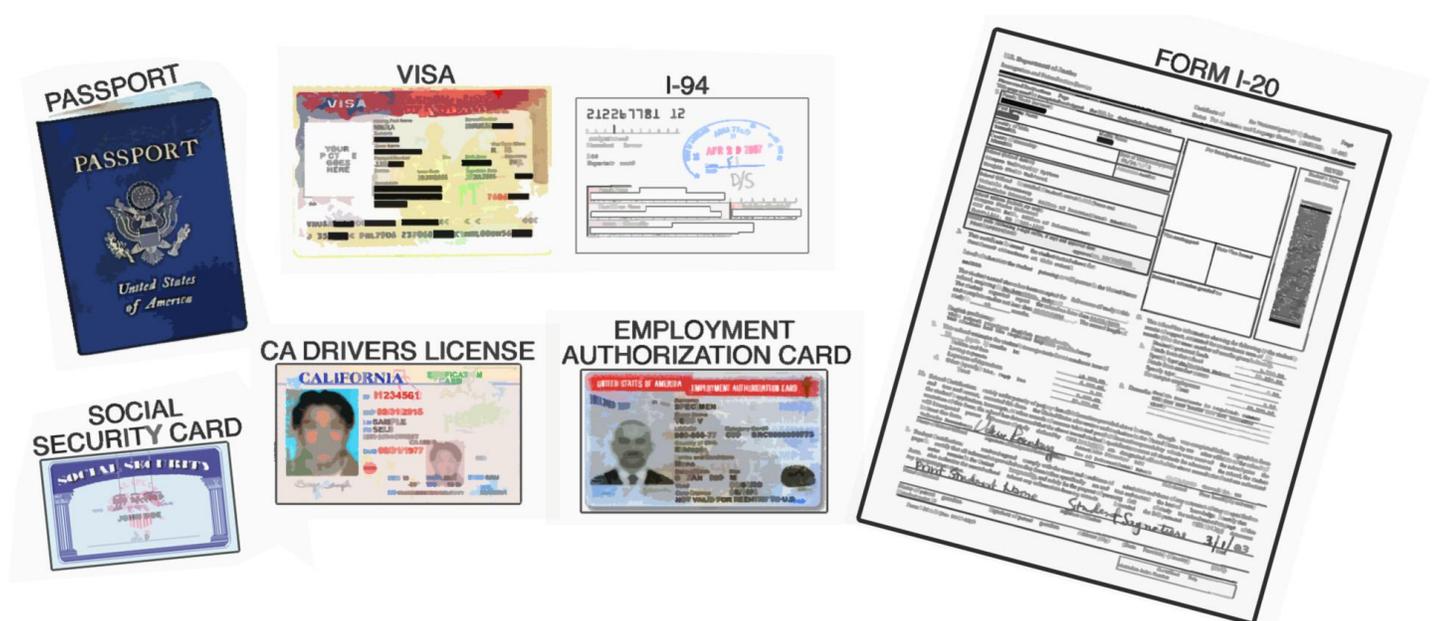
International American University was originally established in 2005 in Los Angeles, CA as a distance learning school offering degrees strictly online. In January 2008, we moved to Palmdale, CA and established our first classroom program. Gaining SEVIS approval in March of 2009 to host F-1 Students, we sought the need for a more cultured location to develop our campus. Thus, we moved back to Los Angeles where we are today! We now have over 1,200 students all over the world and have proudly graduated over 3,000 and growing.

## THE IAU CAMPUS

IAU has two campuses: Los Angeles & Orange County. Our main campus in Los Angeles is centrally located between Hollywood, Santa Monica Pier, Universal Studios, and Downtown Los Angeles while our smaller campus is located about 10 minutes from Disneyland in Orange County! Los Angeles & Orange County are very well known for the great food, beach cities, and deep lineage for well-respected educational institutions. Whichever campus you choose, you are sure to enjoy the city you live in.

## IMPORTANT PAPERS & DOCUMENTS TO KNOW:

Below are some images of important documents you will need to be familiar with as an F-1 Student. Please refer to the following images below as they are mentioned throughout this handbook.



# ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Here at IAU, we offer two kinds of instruction: Hybrid and Online. Both forms of instruction follow the same academic calendar. IAU uses the trimester academic calendar. In short, the trimester system divided the academic year into three equal terms, roughly 16 weeks (4 months) each. The trimesters are: Spring, Summer, and Fall. Each 16-week trimester is divided into two 8-week sessions. Therefore, each trimester has 2 sessions.

Typically, each course is eight weeks long and is broken down into one lesson per week. By breaking each course into eight lessons, the instructor can monitor students' satisfactory academic progress (SAP) in each course. This is an essential element in providing appropriate instruction and support services to students. Please note that the actual start dates change year to year.



■ Mandatory Term    ■ Non-Mandatory Term

Each Academic Term        =    16 weeks  
Each Academic Session    =    8 weeks

## CONTACT

International American University  
3440 Wilshire Blvd., Suite #1000  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
T: (213) 262-3939  
F: (213) 262-5758

Admissions	admissions@iau.LA
Academic Services	academics@iau.LA
Registrar	registrar@iau.LA
Student Services	ssv@iau.LA
SEVIS-Related	dso@iau.LA
General Inquiries	admin@iau.LA
Tuition & Fees-Related	finance@iau.LA
Technical Support	techsupport@iau.LA

# STEP 2: ADMISSIONS

## OVERVIEW

Before embarking on your trip to California, you must first be accepted into a Degree Program. This section will outline the admissions process for IAU. The University welcomes all students and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, disability, gender or in any other way in its policies, practices, or procedures involving applicants, students, faculty staff and the public. Please note, however, that the University reserved the right to refuse admissions to anyone the University believes does not meet its academic standards.

## PROGRAMS WE OFFER

We have two Departments under IAU's School of Management. Your program will fall under one of these two Departments:

Department of Business

- Associates of Science in Business Administration (ASBA) – 60 Units
- Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) – 120 Units
- Master of Business Administration (MBA) – 36 Units

Department of General Education

## REQUIREMENTS FOR F-1 STUDENTS

All F-1 students are required to submit an Admissions Application to the Office of Admissions. The Admissions Application can be found on our website. The application will include a checklist listing all the necessary documents to be submitted. Make sure to include this checklist with the rest of the submitted documents. Your application, the checklist, and the submitted documents will form your Admissions Portfolio (AP). After the Admissions Portfolio (AP) has been received, the Office of Admissions will evaluate your documents to see if your application meets the criteria for acceptance or is missing an element.

IAU reviews every application individually. If an item is missing, the Office of Admissions will contact the applicant and request the missing items. If progress of process becomes inactive or the Admissions Portfolio (AP) remains incomplete for over 30 days, the Admissions Portfolio (AP) will be discarded. Please note that missing documents will delay the process. If there are additional details that will help expedite your processing, for example, you are a "change of status international" student; please add additional notes in section 5 of the Application for Admissions. Knowing your complete details will ensure a timely process.

## ADMISSIONS PORTFOLIO (AP)

The Admissions Portfolio (AP) will be made up of the following documents. Please submit all required/applicable documents to the Office of Admissions:

- **Application + Application Fee:** Complete all items on the printed Application for Admission form (found on website). Type on the form ensuring that all details are legible. Then, print the form and sign/date. There is a \$175 non-refundable application fee for all F-1 applicants.
- **Headshot:** A current photo that is no older than 6 months is required. The photo shall be used for your student identification card and uploaded to your profile (email jpg is acceptable).
- **Official Transcripts:** You must request from every American college or university you have attended and request that an official transcript be sent to the Office of Admissions. An official transcript is one that is sent directly to IAU from the issuing institution. Prior college and university transfer courses and/or degrees must be earned at an appropriately accredited institution or foreign equivalent. For schools outside the U.S., please see policy below.
- **Foreign Credential Evaluations:** *If you completed your degree at a foreign (outside of the United States) college or university, you will need to submit a professional General Report foreign credential evaluation. If you want to receive transfer credit for coursework you have completed at a foreign (outside of the United States) college or university you will need to submit a professional course-by-course evaluation of your coursework.*
- **Resume:** As an undergraduate business student, it is helpful to have professional experience at the time of application. As a graduate business student, it is vital.
- **Evidence of English Proficiency (required for foreign students):** If English is not your native language, or if you have not had your secondary education or higher taught in English, you will be required to provide proof of your English proficiency. Since classes are taught in English, you must demonstrate your ability to read, write and speak English. Please visit our website for the most updated information on English Proficiency Requirements.
- **Copy of Passport:** Passport must NOT be expired.
- **Performance Fact Sheet:** Please view the 'State Reporting' section of the downloads page. Please select the Performance Fact Sheet that reflects the program you are interested in applying for. Our Performance Fact Sheet is a projection of our enrollment, graduation, and success rates for each respective program within the past 2 years. Once you understand this information, please sign and date the first page and initial the rest of the pages.
- **Bank Statements to show financial capability:** Before a U.S. consul will grant a visa, you must prove that you will have sufficient means to meet your expenses while studying in the United States. You must explain the source of your funds and guarantee that you will receive them while at the University. Unless you are able to provide written evidence demonstrating you have adequate financial resources for a minimum of one academic year to complete your degree program, the consulate will not grant a student visa. Submit a certified statement by a bank or acceptable official agency of available funds to cover all expenses while in attendance at the University. They will accept affidavit of support (Form I-134 for sources of support in the United States) as well as a combination of bank statements from your personal account and company/business accounts to show that you are able to fully support yourself while studying in the United States. The amount reflected should be greater than \$10,000 USD, however, we have experienced that those who reflect an amount of \$16,200.00 USD or greater have a more likely chance of approval.

- **Dependent Copy of Passport:** If you plan to bring a spouse and/or children, they will need to be listed on Admissions Application. Please list their names in Section 3 of the Admission Application along with their date of birth, country of citizenship, and relationship to the student. You must add \$1,000 USD per dependent to the total available funds reflected on your bank statements showing financial capability. Submit copy of passport for all dependents.
- **Pre-Enrollment Disclosure:** Prospective students must review the Pre-Enrollment Disclosure. Once you understand the information, you must initial and date the Pre-Enrollment Disclosure document and submit it with the Admissions Portfolio (AP).

## FOR TRANSFER STUDENTS ONLY

- **“SEVIS Transfer-In” form:** If you have been studying at another institution in the United States in F-1 status and plan to enroll at International American University, you will need to complete an F-1 school transfer with the Office of Admissions. You will first need to have appropriate admissions from the IAU Office of Admissions. After admission to IAU, you should complete the incoming F-1/i20 Transfer In Form with the international office at your previous school. The international office at the last school you attended also must release your SEVIS immigration record to IAU. IAU will then be able to issue a transfer I-20 to you. Upon arrival, students must report to the Office of Admission. Bring your passport, IAU I-20, all previous I-20 forms, and your I-94 card.
- Copy of all previous I-20's
- Copy of I-94
- **Transfer Credit (TRC):** The University will consider accepting transfer credit from other schools as determined by the Office of Admissions. To transfer credit to the University, an applicant must submit official academic records from schools previously attended.

## FEES

Application Fee (non-refundable): \$75.00 App Fee + \$100.00 I-20 Fee = \$175.00  
 Undergraduate Tuition: \$200.00 per unit  
 Graduate Tuition: \$400.00 per unit

*PLEASE NOTE THAT ALL FEES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE. For the most current rates on program fees, please contact the Office of Admissions. Contact information can be found on page 2.*

## ACCEPTANCE LETTER & INITIAL I-20

Once the Office of Admissions accepts you into one of our programs, we will issue you an Acceptance Letter, Program Completion Plan, Enrollment Agreement, and a Form called your Initial I-20 deeming you qualified to pursue our program and are eligible to study in the United States.

## SEVIS I-901 FEE

All international students applying for an F-1 visa for the first time must pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee to active your Form I-20. Once you receive your Form I-20, pay the fee and bring a receipt with you to your visa interview.

1. Have your I-20 Form ready
2. Open the SEVIS I-901 Processing website at [www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp](http://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp)

3. Click the second box stating, "Proceed to I-901 Form and Payment"
4. Scroll to the bottom of the page and select "I-20" and click 'OK'
5. The Application Validation form will appear. Fill out each section EXACTLY THE WAY IT IS WRITTEN ON YOUR I-20 FORM.
6. Your SEVIS ID# is located at the top right-hand corner above the barcode and will begin with N00\_\_\_\_\_
7. Press Next and follow the remaining steps prompted by the site

## SUBMITTING YOUR ADMISSIONS PORTFOLIO (AP)

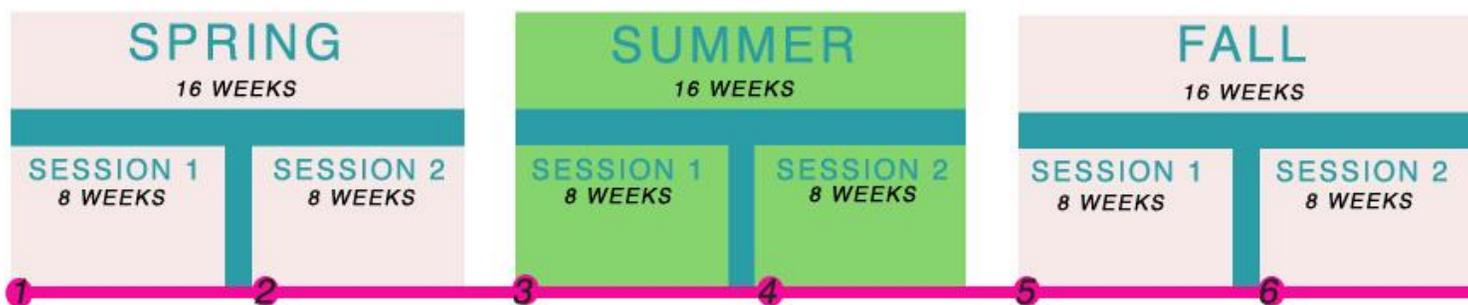
All materials must be submitted in English, and applicants must verify any translations by including the original or a notarized copy of the original. The completed AP and any supporting materials (such as transcripts and test scores) become the property of the University and will not be returned to the applicant or transmitted to a third party. Applicants will submit their AP to the Office of Admissions.

## OPEN HOUSE ORIENTATION

IAU offers Open House Orientations (OHO) for applicants currently located in the United States at our main Los Angeles campus. IAU hosts several each month for applicants who wish to apply for admission into our degree programs! Please note that attending Open House Orientation is mandatory for all applicants in order to complete their application process. Visit our website to reserve your spot at our next OHO.

## ENROLLMENT DEADLINE & ADMISSIONS CALENDAR

To ensure that your application is submitted on time, please note the following enrollment deadlines on the calendar below. IAU has six enrollment dates per year. Every Session start date marks an enrollment term. Please download the most accurate Academic Calendar on our website to see corresponding dates to each Session start date. Please note that each session start dates has application deadlines & registration deadlines. Applicants must take into consideration the time needed to receive an I-20 and Acceptance Letter through mail from our university, the time it will take for the student to schedule a visa interview, obtain their visa, find housing, and travel to the United States. A student should show a reasonable start date in which he or she will be able to complete the above mentioned steps. We recommend applicants submit a completed Admissions Portfolio to the Office of Admissions a minimum of one session (8 weeks) before you plan to arrive and begin your program.



Mandatory Term
  Non-Mandatory Term

# STEP 3: THE VISA INTERVIEW

Congratulations and welcome to IAU! After the Office of Admissions deem your Admissions Portfolio (AP) acceptable and issues you an initial I-20, your next step will be the Visa Interview. Not to worry, we know it can be nerve wrecking, but we will walk you through it!

## FIVE ISSUES WITH THE VISA INTERVIEW

The questions you will be asked in your interview will be used to determine the following key issues:

1. Whether the sole purpose of your travel is to pursue a program of study.
2. Whether you have the ability and intention to be a full-time student in the U.S.
3. Whether you possess adequate funds to cover all tuition, living and anticipated incidental expenses without taking unauthorized employment.
4. Whether you have sufficiently strong social, economic, and other “ties” to your home country to compel your departure from the U.S. upon completion of the planned program of studies
5. Whether you are telling the truth.

The Visa Officer simply needs to be able to say Yes to these five questions to provide you a student visa. Your job is to convince the officer to say Yes.

## HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR THE VISA INTERVIEW?

- Acquire knowledge of the process. Get free, accurate information from the U.S. Embassy website in your country. It will give you the specifics of what they will require and expect you to know. For example, you must know when to apply. Visas should be applied for no more than 90 days prior to the expected date of arrival at the University as listed on the I-20.
- Be prepared. Bring the following to the visa interview: the I-20 form (issued to you by our University), all school documents, test scores, acceptance letter from the University, evidence of funding, bank statements, real estate holdings evidence, father’s position at home, business card if you work, letters of recommendation for your educational plan, letters from future employers *in your home country*, and any documents that you feel would help you prove your ties to your home country and intent to return home. Be completely familiar with all information on the I-20 form, especially the finance information.
- Answer the questions the officer asks. Avoid prepared speeches. Don’t use a prepared script. Know your personal plan or story. Know or develop your own personal career plan, your story of why you are going to the USA, what you plan to study and why you selected International American University, and what you plan to do in your home country after graduation. Your sincerity and the reasonableness or plausibility of your plan will be most persuasive. They are looking for evidence that you have given serious thought to your plans. Do you have an ambition, and is it believable in the context of your country?
- Tell the truth. If the visa officer thinks you are lying, you won’t get a visa. If you don’t know an answer, tell the officer you don’t know. Tell him if you don’t understand the question and ask him to rephrase it. This is not a test; it is an interview. They know that English is your second language

and you may be nervous; stumbling over one question is not fatal. However, one dishonest or faked answer could result in not getting your visa.

## **PRACTICING FOR THE VISA INTERVIEW**

All the questions asked will seek to answer the five key questions above. Some may be designed to directly answer those issues, other are indirect ways of getting an answer. Look at the five issues and think carefully about how you address them. Then write a few paragraphs which answer each of these five questions: sincerely, truthfully, completely, concisely and persuasively. Read the letter out loud to a friend or relative. Re-write it. Read it out again. This is your story. You may or may not have the opportunity to tell some of your story at the interview, depending on the questions being asked. The most important part of the interview is that you respond to the question asked, not that you tell your story. Having developed your story, however, you will naturally be able to tell it if a question relating to it comes up, which is likely.

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS THAT ARE OFTEN ASKED OF OUR APPLICANTS**

- How did you learn about the University?
- How many other universities did you apply to?
- Why did you choose this University?
- Why not a bigger school?
- Which school did you graduate from?
- Tell me why you want to go to America?
- Where do you work now?
- How much do you earn now?
- What is your academic background and why do you want to pursue this program/degree?
- What is this program?
- How is it structured academically and financially?
- What is meant by "Internship" on the I-20?
- Do you want to work in the U.S.?
- What are your resources to pay your university charges?
- Why didn't you apply for a graduate program directly after your bachelor's degree?
- Why don't you study for this degree in your home country?
- What arrangements have you made for your wife (and children) during your absence?
- What will you do after you go back to your home country?
- Have you taken GRE, GMAT or ESL? If not, why not?

Have a friend or relative ask you these questions and provide responses.

## **TEN POINTS TO REMEMBER**

The following ten points are from Gerald A. Wunsch and Martha Wailes and are reprinted from the website of NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Carefully read all of these points before applying for your student visa.

1. Ties to home country — Under U.S. law, all applicants for nonimmigrant visas are viewed as intending immigrants until they can convince the consular officer that they are not. You must therefore be able to show that you have reasons for returning to your home country that are stronger than those for remaining in the USA. Ties to your home country are the things that bind you to your hometown, homeland, or current place of residence: job, family, financial prospects that you own or will inherit investments, etc. If you are a prospective undergraduate, the interviewing officer may ask your specific intentions or promise of future employment, family or other

relationships, educational objectives, grades, long-range plans, and career prospects in your home country. Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter, which can guarantee visa issuance.

2. English — Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview.
3. Speak for yourself — Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.
4. Know the program and how it fits into your career plans — If you are not able to articulate the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to immigrate. You should also be able to explain how studying in the USA relates to your future professional career when you return home.
5. Be concise — Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under considerable time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers to the visa officer short and to the point.
6. Supplemental documentation — It should be clear at a glance to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2–3 minutes of interview time, if you're lucky.
7. Not all countries are equal — Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the USA.
8. Employment — Your main purpose of coming to the USA should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. While many students do work off-campus during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their U.S. education. You must be able to clearly articulate your plan to return home at the end of your program. If your spouse is also applying for an accompanying F-2 visa, be aware that F-2 dependents cannot, under any circumstances, be employed in the United States. If asked, be prepared to address what your spouse intends to do with his or her time while in the United States. Volunteer work and attending school part-time are permitted activities.
9. Dependents remaining at home — If your spouse and children are remaining behind in your country, be prepared to address how they will support themselves in your absence. This can be an especially tricky area if you are the primary source of income for your family. If the consular officer gains the impression that your family members will need you to remit money from the USA in order to support themselves, your student visa application will almost certainly be denied. If your family does decide to join you at a later time, it is helpful to have them apply at the same post where you applied for your visa.

10. Maintain a positive attitude — Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

## QUOTES FROM OTHER STUDENTS ABOUT THEIR VISA INTERVIEWS

- Student quote #1: Americans are very straightforward people. When you go to the embassy, be simple. Don't try to be too polite. When you greet the visa officer just say, "Hi," and it is good enough. Especially don't try to persuade them about any point (returning to your home country, etc.), because it causes suspicion. Be honest and realistic, as honesty has a great value for them. There are also a lot of other delicate points. The first time I went for my visa interview, when the officer asked what my plans were for the future, I used the phrase "If I return to Iran, I will..." She finally told me that "if" was a big "IF" and she suspected I might never return, and she rejected my visa. On my second interview, I used this phrase instead: "When I return to Iran, I will..." I think it made a whole lot of difference.
- Student quote #2: I really don't know what exactly to explain about obtaining my visa, because it was so easy in Bulgaria. The written questions you sent me with all other documents about how to pass the interview were very useful. In Bulgaria, I think it is not so difficult to obtain a visa because the people that can't pass the interview are a very small group. To me, the most important things are:
  1. Have good English, and don't talk too much. Just speak exactly on the question, and don't try to impress them that you are so smart. These officers are smart enough, and they really can see many things in the one or two sentences that you say.
  2. Have very clear documents. If you can show everything on the documents it is half of the interview.
  3. Be prepared. The officer asked me only two or three questions about what my job is, where I have been working, and how I heard about the University. I think what the officer really wanted to know was why I was going to the USA. Was it to improve my knowledge, or just to get inside the country without any specific reason?
  4. Be confident. Just don't give any sense of doubt. Take it easy and listen to the questions.
- Student quote #3: My visa interview was very brief; it only took about a minute. I think it's not only because the consul had a lot of people to interview that day, but also because I was ready with all the documents that he asked for (I-20, bank statements, employment certificate, etc.). The supporting documents that the admissions office sent me in preparation for my visa interview helped me a lot. All those reminders, sample interview, and checklists contributed much to the success of my visa interview. One important thing is that one should be honest in what he says, because it would always show in the way he speaks with the consul. Practicing an interview with a friend also helps.
- Student quote #4: The thing is you should not care for the interview as your life. You should take it easy and don't be frightened on seeing the Visa Officer. Just talk to him confidently in such a way that you feel that whether or not you get the visa, it doesn't matter. It requires more than confidence. Sometimes the visa officer may put you in a tricky situation. Then you should be able to face it boldly by kicking off the ball. My strong advice is for Indians to join in U.S. visa groups, which you can find in the Yahoo groups list. Once you join, everyone will be mailing you their interviews and you can go through hundreds of different interviews and can keep track of the situation at the embassy.

- Student quote #5: These were the questions asked to me by the Visa Officer at the Consulate:

1. "How did you gain admission to the University?"
2. "What made you want to study again after taking a break of three years after your last degree?"
3. "What was your TOEFL score?"
4. "What are your plans after finishing the degree?"
5. "Who is your sponsor and what is his occupation?"

Before attending the visa interview, I prepared myself in such a way that every answer of mine should be convincing and to the point. I convinced the officer that as soon as I finish my degree I'll return back to my home country. This is the most important point and before giving any reply, we should remember this.

- Student quote #6: First of all, I was well prepared. I brought all the necessary documents and even had all other supporting documents that I thought would be helpful. The admissions office had specified for me most of these documents in the process of applying to the program. When I first met the visa officer, his first question was, "Who will pay for the education?" I replied, "Some portion will be paid through internship and the rest by me." He continued by asking whether I have the money or not. I told him that I have money and he wanted me to show him my bank statement, and I did that.
- Student quote #7: Getting my visa in Bulgaria was really easy. The interview itself was very easy and fast. The officer just asked me a couple of questions. "What are you planning to do after you graduate?" I said, "I will return to my country and will continue to work for my current employer." Then she changed the subject and started to ask me about my family and if I have any relatives in the USA. The whole process was about two or three minutes long.
- Student quote #8: My experience was interesting, but I want to tell about it by giving some advice.
  1. Take a full set of documents, especially documents from the University which describe your payment plan. Obviously, documents about payment require a bank statement.
  2. Dress neatly and smile.
  3. You should listen to the interviewer's words carefully, but do not make him feel that you are straining to understand. Usually this is difficult, because of the noisiness of the place where the interview is conducted.
  4. Be prepared to answer any question about the University, about yourself, relatives, previous job, and education.
  5. Be extremely prepared to speak about your future plans. This leads to thinking about what you will do after graduation.
  6. Speak confidently and honestly, because the interviewer's job is to crack your psychic defense. If you are dishonest, they will easily recognize it. Remember a proverb: "The bitter truth is better than a sweet lie." Of course, speak no unnecessary words. Just answer on what they ask. Every additional word will hamper the progress.
- Student quote #9: We did not have any problem getting a visa from the U.S. embassy in Nepal. In my case, the visa officer did not even check the financial statement, which is normally checked by each visa officer. She just turned the pages quickly and asked whether I had enough money to spend for my education. That's all. I do not think there are any special points to be taken carefully. Only having a genuine attitude is enough. Providing you do not try to use the University's name as a medium to escape from your country, I think getting a visa will not be a difficult job.

- Student quote #10: I handed all my documents to the visa officer including the job agreement I have with my boss. After reading it, he asked nothing but why I chose this school and why I chose a program with curricular practical training. I told him my personal plan, and explained that I've compared many universities but no other offered a program that matched both my own needs, and those of my company in China. I explained that this is why my boss has agreed to let me go to study and to re-hire me on my return. I also told the interviewer about my younger brother who is enrolled in a doctoral program at the University of Florida in Computer Networking. The interview lasted about ten minutes. I felt from the beginning that he never planned on giving me the visa, but after he listened patiently to me, he finally relented and said, "Good luck." So we can still get visas, even in Beijing, even being refused before.

## GOOD LUCK!

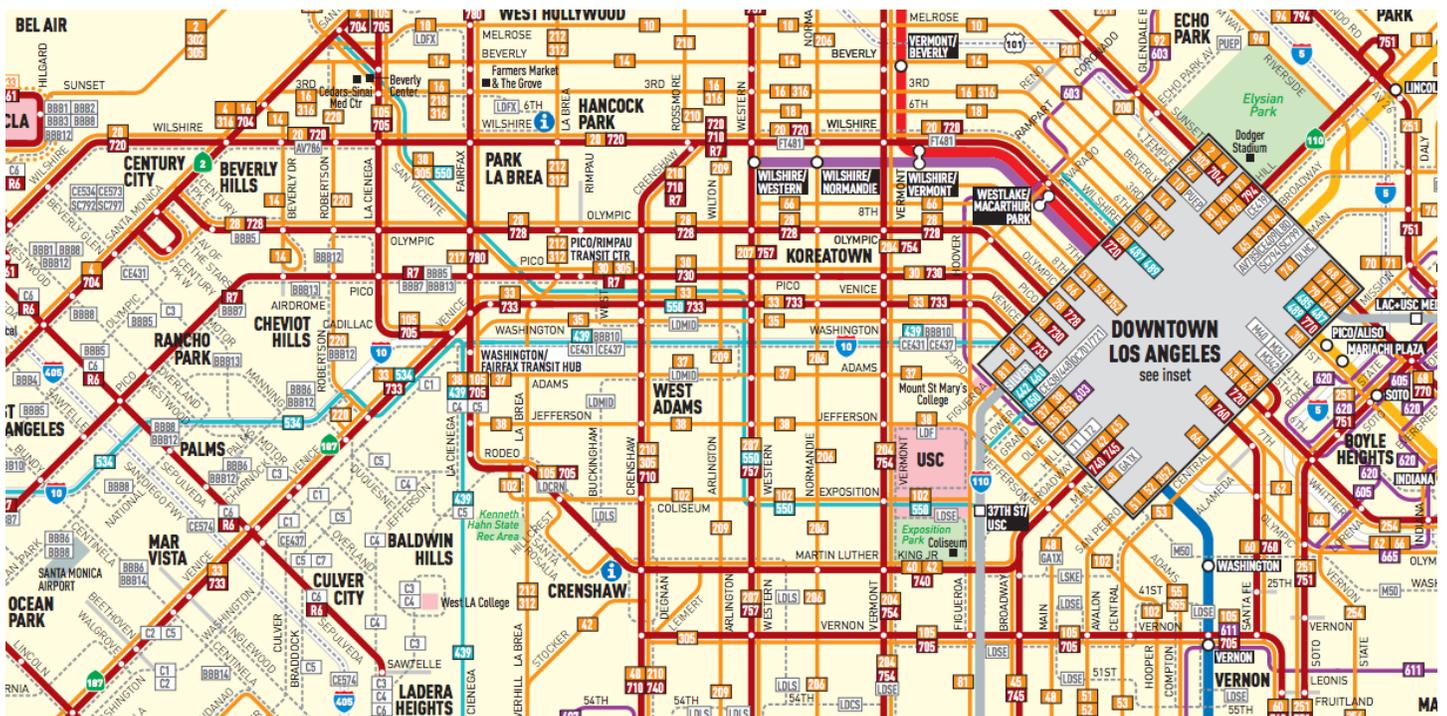
Remember, many of our international students did not receive their visa after their first interview. So, don't be discouraged if you don't immediately get the result you desire. You can always try again for another entry date. We wish you the best of luck!

# STEP 4: PLANNING & PACKING:

Congratulations on receiving your F-1 Visa! Now that you have received your visa, it's time to think about making your stay in the United States as convenient and comfortable as possible. Traveling to a new place can be a challenge, and your first year away from home is one of the biggest challenges most students will face. Not to worry, our friendly and helpful IAU Staff is here to help make the transition as smooth as possible. Whether it is trying to figure out how to find your nearest bank, or better ways to be involved in the community, or finding the right type of housing, IAU will offer you resources and guides. Remember, your success is our priority!

## TRANSPORTATION IN LOS ANGELES

If you do not have the means to your own car, not to worry! Los Angeles has great alternatives to owning your own vehicle. Bus Routes and Metro stations will take you almost anywhere you'll need to go within the greater Los Angeles Area. Visit [www.metro.net](http://www.metro.net) for more detailed maps and routes!



## HOUSING IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles has a number of options for housing. We do recommend that you search for housing options AT LEAST six weeks before your enrollment date and move into the space no MORE THAN ONE MONTH before your enrollment date. Whether you choose a Home Stay with an American family, an apartment of your own for yourself or your family, or even renting out a place with other local students, we have some suggestions while considering choosing living situations:

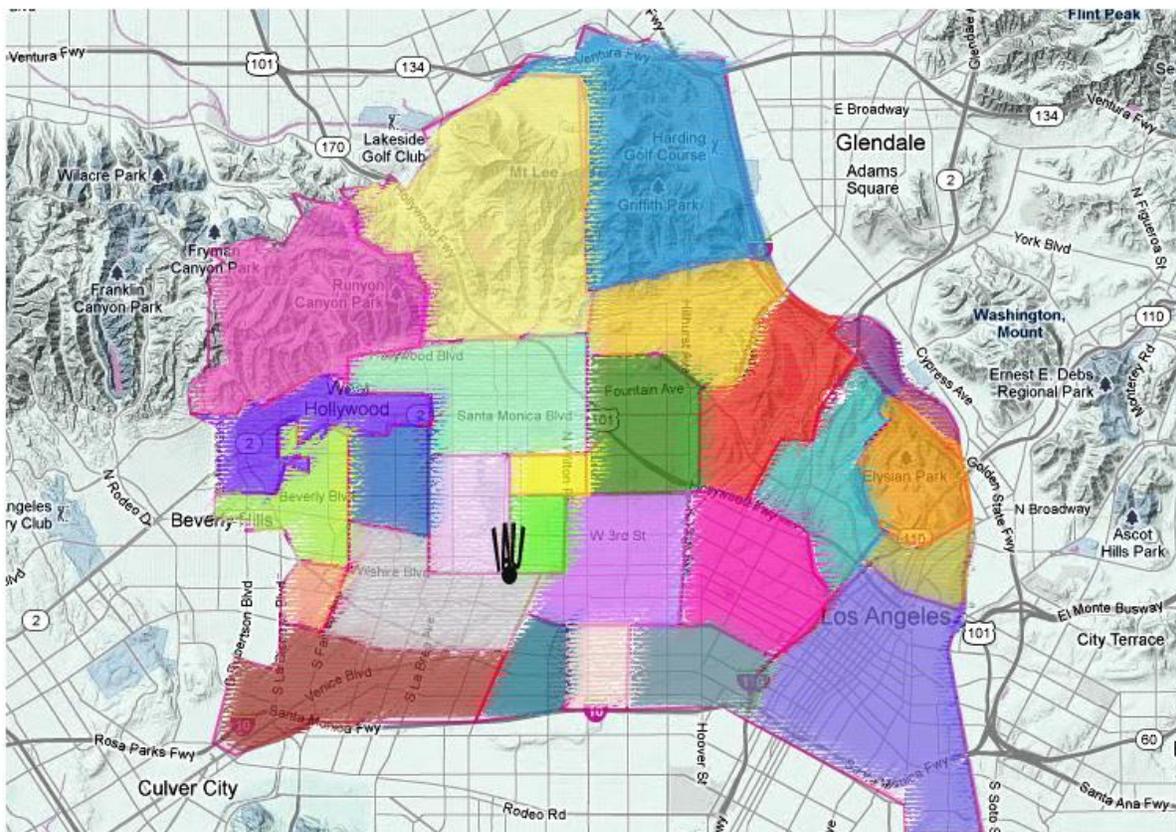
1. Consider how you will get from one place to another. Whether it be to school or to the grocery, you want to make sure it is not too far to the point where getting there will be an extreme hassle. Choose a

location with many necessities close by.

2. Consider your needs and the needs of your family if they travel to the U.S. as your dependents. If you have children, are there schools nearby where they can attend? Where are the nearest hospitals, pharmacies, and department stores?
3. Consider your costs. Each neighborhood in Los Angeles has separate cost of living price points.
4. Be open about living situations. If you are single, you may want to think about staying at a Home Stay, finding a roommate, or getting a very small studio.

Here's a listing of common search engines most locals use when looking for housing. These options will give you filters helping you to narrow down price ranges, locations, and number of rooms:

- Homestays (search Los Angeles Homestays) – [www.usaish.com](http://www.usaish.com)
- [LosAngeles.Craigslist.com](http://LosAngeles.Craigslist.com)
- [ForRent.com](http://ForRent.com)
- [ApartmentFinder.com](http://ApartmentFinder.com)
- [Trulia.com](http://Trulia.com)
- [Padmapper.com](http://Padmapper.com)



HOLLYWOOD HILLS WEST	FAIRFAX	HANCOCK PARK	DOWNTOWN
HOLLYWOOD HILLS	EAST HOLLYWOOD	EAST HOLLYWOOD	HARVARD HEIGHTS
GRIFFITH PARK	SILVERLAKE	MID-CITY	CHINA TOWN
LOS FELIZ	ECHO PARK	MID-WILSHIRE	PICO UNION
HOLLYWOOD	ELYSIAN PARK	WINDSOR SQUARE	
WEST HOLLYWOOD	WESTLAKE	LARCHMONT	
BEVERLY GROVE	KOREA TOWN	CARTHAY	

# STEP 5: SEVIS, YOUR I-20, & US ENTRY

Once you receive your F-1 Visa, pack up all your belongings, and arrange housing, you will need to be familiar with the legal aspects of the F-1 Visa. SEVIS is an acronym for Student Exchange Visitor Information System. In short, SEVIS is an online tracking system for International Students (F-1, F-3, J-1, M-1 and M-3 immigration status) and their dependents (F-2, J-2 and M-2). Through SEVIS, we will input your data regarding details of your program dates, personal information, and progress of your F-1 status, which is summarized into a form called an I-20.

## **WHAT IS AN I-20 AND WHY DO YOU NEED ONE?**

An I-20 Form is a government form on which IAU certifies to the United States government that you are eligible to receive an F-1 visa. It certifies that you:

1. Are going to be an enrolled full-time student pursuing a Degree Program;
2. Have satisfied all admission requirements and been accepted to IAU; and
3. Have proven that you have sufficient financial support to study and live in the United States for the duration of your program.

Upon acceptance to our University, we will issue you an Initial I-20. Every F-1 student will have an I-20. You will have used this document during your visa interview and will later use it upon entry into the United States.

## **HOW DO I COMPLY WITH THE U.S. IMMIGRATION LAWS REGARDING STUDENTS?**

To remain eligible for the open-ended D/S notation on your I-94 card, be sure to complete each of the following actions:

1. Enroll at the School Which Issued Your I-20 Form you were admitted to the United States to attend the school that issued your I-20 form. Using an I-20 from one school to gain admission to the United States to attend another school is a violation of U.S. immigration law. Generally, you should plan to attend the institution that furnished your I-20 for at least one semester before attempting to transfer elsewhere. You will need an I-20 to obtain an F-1 visa or to keep lawful F-1 status when transferring or changing schools within the United States.
2. Keep A Valid I-20 at All Times: Although you have been admitted to the U.S. for the open-ended "Duration of Status," you must make sure that your I-20 does not expire. Item 5 of the form contains both a start and an end date. If you cannot complete your studies by the end date on the form, you must come to the CIE to request program extension BEFORE the end date on the form. Please note that this date is different from the expiration date on the F-1 visa sticker in the passport. While your visa sticker may expire without jeopardizing your F-1 status, the I-20 must be valid at all times
3. Report Every Change of Address to ICE: F-1 students must always furnish their current residential and mailing address to the university. Students who arrive in the U.S. and find an apartment for the first time or who later move to a new residence have 10 days to report the new address to the Center for International Education and to the Registrar for their school. The university will update the address

information in SEVIS. Please note that a student arriving in the U.S. for the first time cannot be registered in the SEVIS database until he or she provides a current local U.S. addresses to the immigration advisor. The address must be the actual residential location where you live. Do not submit the address of a friend or relative if you are not residing at that location.

4. Enroll in and Maintain a Full-Time Course Load Every Semester: F-1 students are required by law to maintain a full-time course load. Students must be enrolled full-time every Fall and Spring Semester. Summer semester is the official vacation term of the university for all semester-calendar programs, and students may be enrolled full-time, part-time, or not at all during the summer, with one important exception: Graduate students who begin their studies at IAU in the second session must be enrolled in six units to be considered full time. Full-time enrollment criteria in the regular academic year vary by major and level of study.

## **DSO - YOUR SEVIS ADVISOR**

Your Designated School Official or DSO is here to answer any questions about your status as an F-1 Student. They are in charge of keeping track and communicating with the other Departments within IAU making sure you are in good standing academically to ensure your stability as an F-1 student. Report any changes to your DSO within 10 days.

## **ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES: PLANNING YOUR ARRIVAL**

Timing your arrival into the United States is very important. You may be refused entry into the United States if you attempt to arrive *more than 30 days* before the program start date listed on your SEVIS I-20 Form. As they do understand that you need to arrive early to get settled and familiarized with your University's Campus, they see no reason in taking more than 30 days to do so.

## **DOCUMENTS & BAGGAGE**

While traveling, carry all important documents as well as copies of them in your hand-carry (for yourself, as well as all your dependents). DO NOT pack any important documents in ANY CHECKED-IN BAGGAGE. ALWAYS HAND-CARRY YOUR DOCUMENTS. Do not check the following documents in your baggage. If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will be unable to present the documents at your port of entry. As a result, you may not be able to enter the United States.

- Your passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay
- SEVIS Form I-20
- Bank Statements or evidence of financial resources
- Evidence of student status, such as recent tuition receipts and transcripts
- Paper receipt for the SEVIS fee and Form I-797
- Name and contact information for your "Designated School Official", including a 24-hour emergency contact number at the school (we will provide you with this information)

## **COMPLETE YOUR ENTRY PAPERWORK**

If Arriving By Air: Flight attendants will distribute Customs Declaration Forms (CF-6059) and Arrival Departure Record Forms (I-94). These must be completed prior to landing. If Arriving By Land or Sea: The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer at the port of entry will provide the necessary Customs Declaration Forms (CF-6059) and Arrival-Departure Record Forms (I-94) to be filled out upon your arrival.

## PORT OF ENTRY

When you arrive to the Port of Entry, proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers. Have the following documents available for presentation (for yourself, as well as your dependents):

- Passport
- SEVIS Form (I-20)
- Arrival-Departure Record Form (I-94) - The Form I-94 should reflect the address where you will reside, not the address of the school or program
- Customs Declaration Form (CF-6059)

All visitors entering the United States must state their reason for wishing to enter the country. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. It is important that you tell the CBP Officer that you will be a student. Be prepared to include the name and address of the school program where you will enroll/participate.

Once your inspection is successfully completed, the inspecting officer will stamp your SEVIS I-20 Form for duration of status (“D/S”). The notation “D/S”, indicates that students are admitted to the United States for “Duration of Status”. Duration of Status is a term indicating that once you have been admitted to the U.S. in F-1 status, you may remain in F-1 status as long as you comply with all of the laws regarding F-1 students or until you have completed your academic program.

They will also stamp your Arrival-Departure Record Form (I-94) and staple it in the passport. Following Admission into the United States, students must report to their DSO within 30 days of the enrollment date to validate their intended participation. Failure to report to the University within 30 days of enrollment date will lead in serious consequences.

# STEP 6: WELCOME TO CALIFORNIA: New Student Orientation

Once you have arrived and settled in, IAU will welcome you with an Orientation held before the first day of class. You will meet IAU's Staff, other students, and learn more about campus life.

## *WHAT IS NEW STUDENT ORIENTATION*

New student orientation (NSO) is brief presentation given by IAU to all incoming students at the beginning of each term. During the presentation, we will briefly familiarize with you everything you will need to know while studying at IAU.

## *DOCUMENTS TO BRING WITH YOU ON THIS DAY*

Your DSO will collect the following documents from you and make copies for IAU records. Please bring with you all original documents. (Clarification of these documents including what they look like is on page 2)

1. Stamped I-20
2. Stamped I-94
3. Passport

## *STUDENT SERVICES*

We will briefly explain a little about getting settled into the IAU Campus from Parking, Computer Use, Internet Access, Facility Access, and Student Lounge, to help on homework!

## *MAINTAINING LAWFUL STATUS*

To ensure that you are complying with the regulations of your F-1 Visa, please make sure you:

Academic Standing

- a. Attend class
- b. Maintain satisfactory progress in completing the program
- c. Maintain a full course of study: 12 units for undergraduate programs, 9 for graduate programs

Report any changes made to your DSO within 10 days.

- a. Change in major/program
- b. Change in Local Address
- c. Change in Financial Standing
- d. Extension of program
- e. Withdrawal of program
- f. Dropping a course
- g. Reduced Course load
- h. Transferring out
- i. Change of Status

## **REGISTRATION I-20 (SEVIS)**

You will discuss your class schedule and Academic roadmap with the Director of Academics. Once you are physically on campus, we will notify SEVIS that you have arrived and have enrolled. We will input your new U.S. Address and provide you with another I-20 Form we call your 'Registration I-20'.

## **CLASS REGISTRATION & FEES**

You will discuss your finalized class schedule with the Director of Academics to ensure that you understand the details of your course load for the academic term. At this time, you will also be asked to pay your first set of Registration Fees.

Registration Fees are collected at the beginning of each term and will only cover the current term you are enrolled in. As mentioned earlier, Undergraduate students are required to take a minimum of 12 Semester Units (4 classes), while Graduate Students are to take 9 Semester Units (3 classes) to be considered full time. You will only be required to pay for the 12 or 9 Units you are currently enrolled in for that term at this time. Please consult with The Office of Admissions for the most current tuition rates.

## **IAU ONLINE / MOODLE**

The way we offer our students comprehensive curriculums online is through a system that allows instructors to recreate a classroom setting in a virtual space we like to call IAU ONLINE. IAU ONLINE is a web-based system that students can access from anywhere, anytime. It will require a student log in provided by the university.

The IAU ONLINE class is structured very much like that of a real classroom. You will have a professor who will assign you weekly readings or a textbook, assignments, tests, papers, projects, and even have online discussion boards to interact with your fellow classmates. Everything is submitted electronically and will be graded by your professor through the promptness and involvements you show in each assignment you are given, much like it would be in a real classroom setting.

## **MYIAU**

myIAU is an online resource we provide to students to track the classes they are enrolled in, grades, and financial balance. Your name, address, telephone number, email, and other personal contact information are stored within this system. If you change it, the DSO will update your information into myIAU so that you will always view the most current information. This helps us to keep everyone on the same page. After each course, we will update your grades and notify you when they are ready to be viewed. For all payments, we will

track how much you have paid as well as how much you owe to make sure you are always aware of your financial balance.

## **TEXTBOOKS - WHERE & WHERE TO BUY THEM**

Before you arrive, we will send you a textbook list for all the classes you will need to be prepared for your first day of class. We highly encourage that you buy your books online ahead of time. Remember that your success will depend on your class preparation. The earlier you have your books, the better. Keep in mind that standard shipping in the United States is about 7-10 business days. We recommend you order your books TWO WEEKS before the first day of class to be safe.

## **IAU TEXTBOOK POLICY**

ALL TEXTBOOKS THAT ARE PROPERTY OF IAU CANNOT LEAVE CAMPUS. If you borrow a book, please use it to study on campus. We have a limited number of copies for textbooks we let students borrow. If you are borrowing a textbook, you must sign in/out at the front desk. We are open Monday through Fridays from 9:30 AM – 6:30 PM and have study rooms open for your use.

## **FREE ENGLISH CLASSES**

IAU offers FREE ESL/Intermediate English Class\* for students enrolled in our Degree Programs who would like to improve and hone their English Speaking skills. They will help you to learn about not only the English Language but also the interactions and our customs helping you to understand, adjust, and interact with native English speakers. For those who are seeking to engage in some sort of employment during the duration of their program or immediately after, we highly encourage you take advantage of these free ESL classes.

*\*SEE class schedule for accurate dates/times free ESL class if offered.*

# STEP 7: SETTLING INTO L.A.

Adjusting and Living in America. Detailed listing of local markets, restaurants, recreational activities, banks, shopping centers, hospitals, and coffee shops in LA

## **BANK ACCOUNT**

To make financial matters easier for you while staying in the United States, it is advisable to open a US bank account. There are too many banks for us to list here, but you will notice just by driving around which banks are the most popular. Any international student who expects to be in America for more than a year should open a US bank account.

The bank is not only a safe place to keep your money, but also convenient if you find student work on campus or expect funds to be wired to you from another country. Many banks won't charge a fee to open an account as long as you deposit a minimum amount and keep a minimum balance. You probably will have to pay a fee if you try to withdraw more money than you have from your account. The bank may also charge a fee from other items or services. All you need to open a bank account is to fill out paperwork and show some forms of identification. The bank may ask an international student to show a passport, student ID, visa, license or another document with a name and address.

## **SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER**

If you plan on working in the United States, every eligible F-1 Student will need a Social Security Number (SSN). To find out if you are eligible, speak to your Designated School Official (DSO). A SSN is a 9-digit number issued by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to track working individuals for taxation purposes. This number is NOT intended to be used for identification purposes. Currently, SSNs are only issued to non-residents who have an employment offer. Dependents in F-2 status are not eligible for an SSN since they are not permitted to work.

How to apply for SSN #:

Students must wait at least two weeks after their initial entry into the U.S. to begin the SSN application process. The SSA must receive its database update from the ports of entry before the application can be accepted. To begin the application process, students must first obtain a job offer and bring the job offer letter to their DSO. In 5 business days, a Student Services (SSV) support letter will be prepared for the SSN application. It is not possible to obtain an SSN without this letter. The application for an SSN is free of charge.

Required documents for SSN Application at SSA:

- Application for SS-5 (available at an SSA office or online)
- Valid Passport
- Original SEVIS I-20 (for F-1 visa holders)
- Valid I-94 card (a small white Arrival/Departure card stapled to passport)
- Proof of employment eligibility (such as a job offer letter, I-20 endorsed for CPT, or Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card)
- Social Security letter from SSV

All documents must be either originals or copies certified by the issuing agency. The SSA does not accept photocopies or notarized copies of documents. SSA will then verify the documents with the U.S. Department of

Homeland Security (DHS) before assigning an SSN. A Social Security number and card will be issued within about two weeks of receiving certification from DHS. In most cases, the SSA can quickly verify the documents online. You cannot start working until you receive your SSN.

The closest SSA office from the University:

Social Security  
Wilshire Center  
4000 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
<https://secure.ssa.gov/ICON/main.jsp>

## **DRIVER'S LICENSE**

Another benefit of studying in the United States is the opportunity to obtain a legal driver's license. F and M nonimmigrant are eligible to apply for a license if they are in Active status and present the proper documentation to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) in their state.

What Do I Have To Do To Drive In The United States?

First, discuss this option with your Designated School Official (DSO) to make sure you are in ACTIVE Status in SEVIS. You will need to wait TEN business days after arriving into the United States before being eligible to apply for a driver's license so that your Form I-94, "Arrival/Departure Record," information can update in all the government systems.

When you go to your local DMV, bring originals of the following documents:

- All signed versions of your Form I-20
- Your current Form I-94
- A valid passport with visa (You do not need a visa if you are from a visa-exempt country, such as Canada or Bermuda)
- Proof of residence (An acceptance letter, telephone bill, or personal check with your address on it will verify this information)
- SSN card or a Form SSA-L676

If you are on OPT, bring your Form I-766, "Employment Authorization Document." The DMV will use the A number on this card to verify your status. *If your dependent would like to apply for a driver's license, you must accompany them to the DMV and have full documentation for the both of you.* You may have to take both a driving test and a written test. In many states, if you have a license from your home country or another state, the DMV may not require you to take the tests. Please note that not all states accept driver's licenses from other countries.

Once you pass the tests, if required, and submit all the necessary paperwork, an associate at the DMV will explain the next steps. It is normal for some nonimmigrant to only get temporary licenses. In addition, you may receive the license immediately or you may have to wait several weeks, depending on the state.

## PLACES TO SEE IN LA

We have a broad range of entertainment in this beautiful city. Visit [www.travelinlocal.com](http://www.travelinlocal.com) to view more activities to put on your to-do list!



**GETTY** At the Getty Museum, you can see a variety of European paintings, drawings, manuscripts, sculptures, and decorative arts. This museum brings back the Middle Ages to the present against a backdrop of dramatic architecture, romantic gardens and breathtaking views!

[WWW.GETTY.EDU](http://WWW.GETTY.EDU) - 1200 GETTY CENTER DRIVE, LOS ANGELES - (310) 440-7300



**LACMA** The Los Angeles County Museum of Arts is the largest art museum in the western US. It shares its vast collections through exhibits, public programs, and research facilities that attract nearly a million visitors annually. Currently pre-viewing the Tim Burton Exhibit, LACMA is a must see!

[WWW.LACMA.ORG](http://WWW.LACMA.ORG) - 5905 WILSHIRE BLVD, LOS ANGELES



**DTLA ART WALK** On the second Thursday of every month, from noon to PM, Downtown Los Angeles celebrates the arts with exciting and unique galas, exhibits, music, and to top it off, 2 lots filled with more than 50 different food trucks from all over the nation! With 7 blocks of non stop excitement, DTLA Art Walk is perfect for your Thursday afternoon!

[WWW.DOWNTOWNARTWALK.ORG](http://WWW.DOWNTOWNARTWALK.ORG) - DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES



**GRIFFITH** Reach for the stars! The Griffith Observatory is an icon of Los Angeles, a national leader in astronomy, a beloved gathering place, and one of Southern California's most popular attractions. Best visited during the evening to view the sky through the Zeiss Telescope, come relax, look up, and see beyond Hollywood Stars!

[WWW.GRIFFITHOBSERVATORY.ORG](http://WWW.GRIFFITHOBSERVATORY.ORG) - 2800 EAST OBSERVATORY ROAD, LOS ANGELES



**HOLLYWOOD WALK OF FAME** Located on the Hollywood Strip, the Hollywood Walk of Fame includes more than 2,400 brass stars embedded in the sidewalks exhibiting achievements in today's entertainment industry. You'll be able to see stars such as Michael Jackson, Paul McCartney, Frank Sinatra, Marilyn Monroe and more!

[WWW.WALKOFFAME.COM](http://WWW.WALKOFFAME.COM) - 7018 HOLLYWOOD BLVD, LOS ANGELES



**MELROSE TRADING POST** For a unique type of flea market, The Melrose Trading post will show you LA's hidden gems. From treasures and rare goodies, handmade items, vintage wear, furniture, shoes, books, hand woven blankets, to jewelry, it will be hard for you to leave empty handed. Held every Sunday on the corner of Melrose and Fairfax, every Sunday is Funday!

[WWW.MELROSETRADINGPOST.ORG](http://WWW.MELROSETRADINGPOST.ORG) - 7850 MELROSE AVENUE, LOS ANGELES

## IAU EVENTS

We take pride in being a very small yet close-knit community. As your home away from home, IAU will provide you with not only academic networks and advisors; here you will make new friends. We will throw small festivities on campus to familiarize you with some U.S. holidays we celebrate. The Office of Student Services also strives to provide our students with field trips and extra-curricular activities to make sure you are getting the full experience of studying in the U.S.

# STEP 8: EMPLOYMENT CPT/OPT

As an F-1 Student, SEVIS permits you to be employed under three circumstances: Financial Distress, Curricular Practical Training, and Optional Practical Training. You must be eligible, file the correct paperwork, and comply with all SEVIS and University

## FINANCIAL DISTRESS

F-1 students in financial distress may be able to apply to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) for off-campus employment authorization under certain economic circumstances. Such employment is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session (students must continue to be enrolled full-time) but can be full-time during other periods. Authorization is granted for up to one year at a time. Extensions require a new application.

To be eligible the economic hardship must be caused by unforeseen circumstances beyond the student's control and must occur after the student obtained F-1 status. Examples of possible situations include substantial fluctuations in currency exchange rates, inordinate increases in tuition and/or living expenses, unexpected changes in the financial condition of the student's source of support, or substantial and unexpected expenses which are beyond the control of the student. Extensive documentation is required. The student must have been in F-1 status for at least one academic year.

Although the Economic Hardship program is intended to assist students in financial distress, the time involved in processing requests makes it ineffective in dealing with immediate financial emergencies. Applicants should expect DHS processing to take at least 60 to 120 days or more. If granted, employment authorization is given on an EAD card. Employment cannot begin until the card is received from DHS. Employment authorization is automatically terminated if the student fails to maintain F-1 status, completes the degree program, or transfers to another University.

### APPLICATION PROCEDURES:

1. Complete a form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization" showing "(c)(3)(iii)" in item 16. (Form available on USCIS web page).
2. Provide a copy of any previously issued EAD cards.
3. Two color passport photos taken within the last thirty days. Photo standards are available from the U.S. Department of State at <http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html>
4. Copy of front and back of form I-94, "Departure Record."
5. Obtain an International Student Counselor's recommendation on your I-20.
6. Document the circumstances causing the economic need and the fact that cause was beyond the control of the student. This should include a written statement from the student describing the unforeseen hardship and explaining why other employment options are unavailable or insufficient. The statement should include the initial arrival date in the U.S. in F-1 status, and affirmation that you have properly maintained F-1 status, that you have not worked without authorization and that employment will not interfere with enrollment as a full-time student.
7. A \$340 check or money order payable to "Department of Homeland Security".

## CURRICULAR PRACTICAL TRAINING

Curricular Practical Training makes it possible for F-1 students to gain specific practical work experience. Such training must be an integral part of the curriculum, and the student must be receiving academic credit if the training is not a required part of the degree program. It provides legal authorization for the F-1 student to be in

a work environment whether or not payment of wages is involved. Think of this employment opportunity as an internship course.

A graduate student is able to engage in Curricular Practical Training (CPT) in the United States as soon as he or she begins his program as long as he or she is in Active SEVIS status. An undergraduate student must have been in F-1 status for an academic year to be eligible for CPT and must be In Active SEVIS status. Your DSO authorizes CPT with an endorsement on your I-20 form. No application to DHS or an EAD card is required. The I-20 endorsement provides specific dates for beginning and ending authorization and specifies the employer and site of work. The endorsement must be obtained before work begins.

Curricular Practical Training can be either full-time, which does require at least a minimal enrollment, or part-time (up to 20 hours per week of work), which requires full-time enrollment. Full-time CPT of 12 months or more makes F-1 students ineligible for subsequent Optional Practical Training (See Optional Practical Training below).

#### APPLICATION PROCEDURES:

1. Read and fill out our Curricular Practical Training Form (on our website). Obtain a letter from Employer on letterhead providing required CPT information. Required information includes a description of the work experience, name of employer, beginning and ending dates of employment, and explanation of how the experience will be monitored and graded.
2. Obtain a DSO's approval of CPT on form I-20.

## **OPTIONAL PRACTICAL TRAINING**

After you have completed one of our degree programs, you will have the option to engage in Optional Practical Training is used by students to gain work experience in their field of study after completing a degree program.

Applications for optional practical training for students at IAU must be submitted by mail to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). When approved, an EAD card (Form I-766) will be mailed to the address which is listed on the student's I-765 application form. DHS strongly recommends that students use the mailing address of IAU.

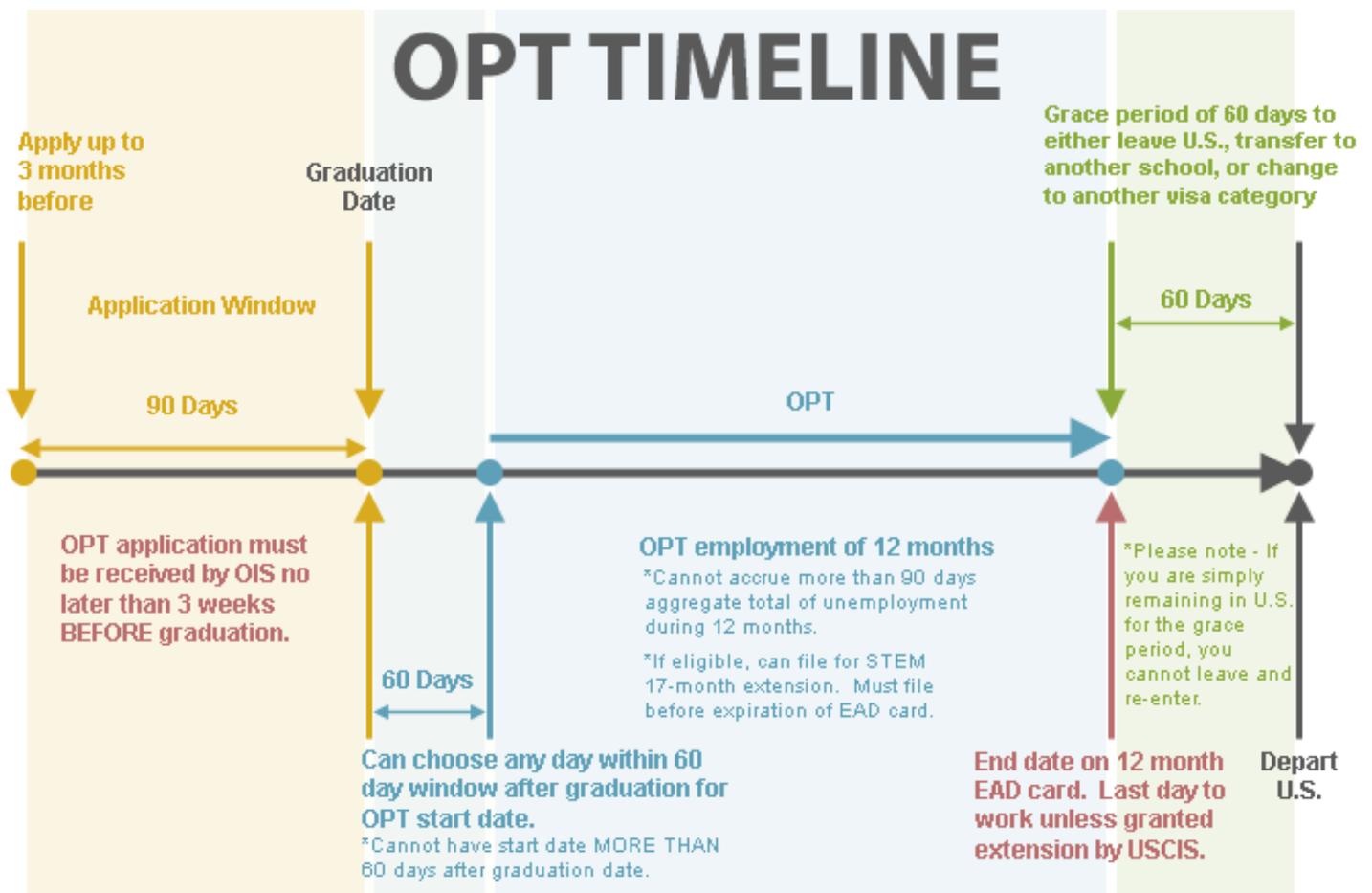
DHS regulations allow up to 12 months of OPT at each degree level for a student in F-1 status. A student must have been in F-1 status for at least 9 consecutive months to be eligible for OPT. In certain circumstances, time spent in full-time study in another immigration status may count toward satisfying the 9-month rule.

An application for post-completion OPT can be filed up to 90 days prior to the student's completion date and no later than 60 days after the student's program-end date. It may take DHS 60 to 90 days or more to process an OPT application. Your DSO may be able to provide a current estimate of processing times. However, DHS processing is erratic, and should never be depended upon to provide prompt and timely service. Applications should be submitted at least 90 days prior to the date you want to begin working. You cannot begin working until you have received your EAD card. Temporary EAD cards are not available.

Students cannot accrue an aggregate of more than 90 days of unemployment during post-completion OPT (the period of time between the beginning and end dates shown on the EAD card). Students must report to the DSO the name and address of their employer, employment supervisor, and the date of employment and a date of termination of employment. Employment information must be updated immediately upon any change of employment and must be reconfirmed at least every six months. This employment information will be shared with the Department of Homeland Security.

## APPLICATION PROCEDURES FOR APPLICANTS:

1. Fill out the IAU OPT FORM, read the information, fill it out and have it signed by your DSO. Form available on our website.
2. Complete a form I-765, "Application for Employment Authorization" fill in item 16 as shown here:  
(c)(3)(A) for pre-completion OPT  
(c)(3)(B) for post-completion OPT  
Form available on USCIS web page
3. A copy of any previously issued EAD cards.
4. Two color passport photos taken within the last thirty days. Photo standards are available from the U.S. Department of State at <http://travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html>
5. Copy of front and back of Form I-94, Departure Record.
6. Obtain an I-20 with an International Student Counselor's recommendation for OPT.
7. Provide a check for \$380 payable to "Department of Homeland Security".
8. For STEM extension applications, complete an "OPT STEM Extension Application".



# STEP 9: TRAVELING OUTSIDE OF THE U.S.

IAU allows all F-1 students, regardless of how many terms they have been previously enrolled, to take Summer Vacation. First, speak to your DSO and the Office of Academic Services to ensure you are in fair academic and financial standing to leave the country. Since Summer Term is NOT a mandatory enrollment term, you are more than welcome to enroll in classes but not required to be enrolled full time. Please be aware that some classes offered during the Summer Term may not be offered in the following Fall Term and may delay your progress in completing your program.

## SEVIS REGULATIONS

If you are planning to leave the United States, please notify your DSO. Do NOT leave the country before notifying your DSO who will check certain documents are in order to verify your eligibility to re-enter the U.S. If you leave without notifying the DSO, we can do little to help you re-enter the U.S. The F-1 student must have a valid form I-20 with a current travel endorsement signed by a DSO on the first and third page. This endorsement is needed even if the student will be out of the U.S. for only a few hours.

The student must also have a valid F-1 visa for re-entry, or the student will have to get a new F-1 visa at a U.S. consulate while outside the United States. There are certain exceptions to the visa rule that should be discussed with your DSO prior to departure. Due to the inherent risk of immigration problems in international travel and re-entry into the United States, travel should be limited to emergency situations, and great care should be exercised in making travel plans.

If your status in SEVIS is pending for any reason (change of status, employment authorization, reinstatement, etc.) with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), we highly recommend you do not travel outside the United States until your status is back to Active.

F-2 dependents can travel with the F-1 student. The F-2 dependents must have a dependent's I-20 issued in their name with a DSO's signed travel endorsement. The F-2 dependents also must have current F-2 visas for re-entry. F-2 dependents that travel separately from the F-1 must also have the above documents.

If the F-1 student will be outside the U.S. for 5 months or more, special DHS rules are applied and a new I-20 for initial entry will have to be issued. Such long-term travel must be discussed with a DSO prior to departure.

Unfortunately, emergency travel is sometimes necessary. Even in these cases, students should contact your DSO prior to departure.

## IAU REGULATIONS

Your first step to traveling outside the United States is speaking to your DSO. They will determine and discuss with the Office of Academic Services if you are in fair standing to leave the country at the requested time during your curriculum. Note that we do allow students to leave for vacation/break but only during designated vacation time windows. See Vacation Periods on the next page.

You must also consult with your instructors for classes in which you physically attend class. If leaving while class is still in session if they will make certain accommodations for the amount of time and work you will miss. Consulting instructors for your online classes are not necessary; however, note that since they are online classes, it does not matter where you are located; we expect that you will keep up with your

assignments and tasks for these classes. You will fill out our F-1 Student Vacation Request Form and have both instructor(s) and DSO sign it.

## VACATION I-20

Once you have notified your instructors and have spoken to your DSO, your DSO will issue you another I-20, called your Vacation I-20. They will sign the first and third page to indicate that they are aware you are leaving the country for a period of time. CARRY this copy, along with all copies of your previous I-20's with you while traveling.

## DEPENDENTS

Your dependent(s) may travel with you or without you ANYTIME. If your dependent(s) would like to travel outside of the United States, we require that the DSO signs the third page of their most current I-20 to guarantee re-entry into the United States. The only time that you will need a Vacation I-20 is when the student leaves the country.

## ACADEMIC CALENDAR VACATION PERIODS FOR WINTER / SUMMER BREAK



# STEP 10: GRADUATION

As you begin your last term at IAU, we will already be preparing you for your upcoming graduation. First, you must apply for graduation with our Graduation Petition Form. The application will notify the Office of the Registrar that you would like to finish your program. They will verify that you are eligible to graduate and have met the minimum academic requirements. The petition can be found on our website.

## **GRADUATION PETITION**

When you begin your last term at IAU, we will already be preparing you for your upcoming graduation. First, you must apply for graduation with our Graduation Petition Form. The application will notify the Office of the Registrar that you would like to finish your program. They will verify that you are eligible to graduate and have met the minimum academic requirements. The petition can be found on our website.

## **GRADUATION PACKAGE**

Upon completing your program, IAU provides you with a complementary Graduation Package. This includes your diploma, a statement of completion, a copy of your transcript, and a degree cover. Graduation frames, pictures, graduation rings, and other post-grad accessories are available for sale. We will provide you with an order form listing our items for sale for your convenience.

## **WHAT ARE MY OPTIONS AFTER GRADUATION?**

When you begin your last term with us at IAU, we will already be notifying you of your upcoming graduation. You have three options as an F-1 Student upon completion of your program:

1. Enroll in another program with our university
2. Transfer to take another program to a different university
3. Apply for Optional Practical Training
4. Change of visa from F-1 to another visa (most commonly H1 Visa through employer sponsorship)
5. Return to your home country

Discuss each of the options with the Office of Admissions when the time comes as they will be facilitating your graduation petition and assisting you in your steps to follow.

## **ALUMNI TESTIMONIAL**

During your time here at IAU, you will discover that we are a very close-knit family. Your experience here at IAU is as important to us as your academic success as we believe they fall hand in hand. As we are a small institution, we think it is important to keep in touch with our Alumni and become aware of their further success. We urge all to fill out our Alumni Testimonial (found on our website) and give us feedback on your experience as well as success post-grad.