



Applying for a F-1 Student Visa and Entering the United States

Congratulations on admission to Roanoke College! To begin your studies, you will need an F-1 Nonimmigrant Student Visa to enter the U.S. The information below will help with the application process.

Information about how to apply for the F-1 student visa can be found at the website of the U.S. embassy or consulate nearest you. Links to all embassy and consular websites are at www.usembassy.gov. Each of the websites has a link to “visas” and then a link to “nonimmigrant visas,” and another to “student visas” or “F-1 student visas.” Follow the instructions provided on these sites to apply for your visa.

Note that your visa cannot be issued more than 120 days before the starting date listed in Section 5 of your I-20 Form. For more information on how long it takes to get a visa appointment and for your visa to be processed, visit travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html and enter the location of the consulate to which you will apply.

Before applying for a visa, there are several things you must do, including:

- Pay a fee called the “SEVIS fee” or the “I-901 fee” online. Instructions for doing this are at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp>. Once you have paid the fee, you will be sent an electronic receipt which you will need to bring to your visa interview.
- Submit your on-line Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application, Form DS 160, at travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html. Print the confirmation page and bring it with you to your visa interview.
- Contact the consulate for a visa appointment. Some consulates have online appointment scheduling systems; others have various ways for scheduling appointments. The consular website will indicate how to set up your appointment. A few consulates allow application by mail or a drop box. This information will also be on the consular website.
- Pay your visa fee (information on how to do this will be on the consulate’s website).

The documents you must bring to your visa appointment include:

- A valid passport. Your passport should be valid for at least six months longer than your intended date of return to your country or than the end of your first year of study.
- The I-20 Certificate of Eligibility Form from Roanoke College. Be sure to sign and date the form at the bottom.
- The electronic receipt for your I-901 fee.
- Proof of payment of your visa fee.
- The DS-160 bar code page that you printed when you submitted your on-line visa application.
- One photograph. The requirements for the photograph are at http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html.
- Official transcripts and diplomas from your high school or previous college or university.
- Score reports from standardized tests required by Roanoke College (TOEFL, IELTS, SAT, ACT, etc.).
- Financial documentation (such as bank statements) indicating that you have the resources to pay for at least one year’s tuition and living expenses.

Please note that these are general instructions. Individual consulates may require additional or different documents. Always consult the consulate’s website for current requirements.

Applicants must prove to the satisfaction of the consular officer that they do not intend to immigrate to the U.S. The consular officer is likely to ask you about ties (for example, your family) that you have to your home country and your plans for the future.

Once you have successfully completed your forms and interview, you will be told when to return to the consulate to pick up your passport with visa or when your passport with visa will be mailed to you. In a short time, you will have your visa! Note that you cannot enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the program start date listed in Section 5 of your I-20 Form.

Upon arrival in the U.S., an officer will ask you for

- Your passport with valid visa
- Your I-20 Form
- Your financial documents (the same ones you provided at your visa interview)
- The I-94 Form (Arrival/Departure Record) - this is a brief form which you will have been given on the airplane or at the border.
- The receipt for your I-901 fee (this is not always requested)

The officer will review your documents, take your photograph and two digital fingerprints, stamp and make notations on your I-20 Form, attach the arrival section of the I-94 Form with notations to your passport, and welcome you to the U.S. For most students this is a fairly easy process.

Information for Canadian Citizens

Canadians are not required to have visas to study in the U.S. This means that determination of your eligibility to enter the U.S. will be made by the officer at your U.S. port of entry, so expect to spend some time at the border. When you enter the U.S. for the purpose of studying at Roanoke College you will need

- Your Canadian passport
- Your Roanoke College I-20 Form
- Your I-901 fee receipt (see information above)
- Financial documentation (see information above)

You will be asked about your ties to Canada and your plans to return to Canada after you complete your studies in the U.S.

When you are admitted to the U.S. in F-1 status, the Arrival section of a form called I-94 Arrival/Departure Record will be attached to your passport. Check to be sure that it has the notation "F-1, D/S" is written on it. If not, you will be considered to be in Visitor (B-2) status, which does not permit study in the U.S.