

M1 Visa (Vocational or Non-Academic Students)

The M1 visa is a nonimmigrant visa for international students who wish to pursue a course of study that is not principally academic in nature at an established vocational or other recognized nonacademic institution such as a post-secondary vocational or business school.

Benefits of the M1 Visa

1. You can enter the U.S. as a fulltime vocational student
2. You can legally work part-time on campus. You may also work off campus if necessary (with prior approval from the USCIS)
3. You can freely travel in and out of the U.S. while on a valid visa
4. Your dependents can live with you as long as you maintain your M1 status
5. M1 visas are issued quickly

Requirements for the M1 Visa

To qualify for a student visa, you must prove that:

1. You have been accepted for a full course of study by a vocational institution approved by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The institution must send you a Form I-20M-N, certificate of eligibility for nonimmigrant (M1) student status for vocational students
2. You are sufficiently proficient in English to pursue the intended course of study, or the school you intend to attend has made special arrangements to teach you the English language
3. You have sufficient funds to cover the first year of study, and access to sufficient funds to cover subsequent years
4. You have a permanent residence in your home country, which you do not intend to abandon
5. You intend to depart the U.S. upon completion of the course of study. You may establish this by presenting evidence of economic, social and/or family ties in your homeland sufficient to induce you to leave the U.S. upon completion of studies
6. Your proposed education in the U.S. would be useful in your homeland, and therefore induce you to leave the U.S. upon completion of studies

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) system replaces the Interim Student and Exchange Authentication System (ISEAS), which the Department of State had been using since mid-2002. All new I-20s and DS-2019s dated after February 15, 2003, must be created within the SEVIS system.

The purpose of SEVIS is to monitor the visa adjudication process and oversee the academic career of foreign students and their dependants who enter the U.S. using an M1 or M-2 visa under the SEVIS guidelines, the student's proposed U.S. school must submit specific information electronically before a student visa may be issued. The required information is:

1. The full name of the student
2. Date and place of birth of the student
3. Nationality/Citizenship of the student. The school's code/program number
4. The school/program name

Applying for the M1 Visa

The first step is to obtain from the school or vocational institution the Form I-20M-N entitled Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (M1) student status. Schools that have received U.S. Government approval to enroll foreign students have the authority to issue these forms. An M1 visa cannot be processed without the Form I-20M-N. Item 11 at the bottom of page one of the Form I-20M-N must be completed and signed by the applicant and submitted together with the following:

1. DOS Form DS-160, Nonimmigrant Visa Application
2. A copy of your passport which is valid for at least six months beyond the period of stay in the U.S. and with at least one blank page
3. Two identical color photographs showing full face without head covering against a light background. You may wear a headdress if required by a religious order of which you are a member
4. Evidence demonstrating sufficient funds to cover all expenses including the tuition fee and living expenses. Such evidence may include detailed bank statements of accounts showing that adequate funds are available for transfer, evidence of scholarships and/or combination of finances which will meet the estimated total expenses, including tuition, of your proposed stay in the U.S.
5. Evidence demonstrating that you have a residence abroad to which you intend to return at the end of your stay in the U.S. This is generally established by evidence of family, professional, property, employment or other ties and commitments to some country other than the U.S. sufficient to cause the applicant to return there at the conclusion of your stay
6. Your academic qualifications - such evidence may include complete transcripts of grades and test records for the last four years of school and evidence of TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores

Duration of Stay

You may enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the designated registration date on the Form I-20M-N. You can stay in the U.S. for the period of time it will take to complete the course of study as indicated on the Form I-20M-N plus 30 days.

Working on the M1 Visa

You may be allowed to accept employment only if it is a required part of your practical training and the employment is approved in advance by the office of the USCIS.

Spouses and Children

Spouses and/or children under the age of 21 who wish to accompany or join you in the U.S. for the duration of your stay can apply for M-2 visas.