

F-1 Visa Application

F-1 Visa and Your I-20 Form

The I-20 form is a document issued by Bellarmine University that allows you to apply for an F-1 student visa. The visa itself will be inserted into your passport once approved. Both are equally important for maintaining status once you have entered the United States. When you receive it, check that your I-20 is accurate, including your name, program dates, and major. Make sure to sign your I-20 with blue ink.

Do not apply for your visa interview before receiving your I-20 from Bellarmine University. **Do not wait to apply for a visa once you have received your I-20** unless instructed by International Support. Visa issuance is not guaranteed and can take time. A consular officer may decide that you will need to attend a second appointment or that your application needs additional processing. Please notify us about the results of your interview and your travel plans. **Do not buy plane tickets or make travel plans until your visa is approved.**

SEVIS Fee

You need to pay the Student Exchange Visitor System (SEVIS) service fee at least three days **before** your visa interview. You may pay the fee directly by going to <https://fmjfee.com>. Currently the cost for an F-1 applicant is \$350 and the cost for a J-1 applicant is \$220.

Complete the Online Application Form DS-160

- The DS-160 (Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application form) is submitted online and must be completed before scheduling an interview to determine if you will be approved for an F-1 student visa.
- For access to the online DS-160 form, please visit <https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>
- You will need to provide personal information, including all your social media handles from the last five years.
- After you have completed the DS-160, you must print and keep the DS-160 barcode page (You will not need to print the full application)
- You will need to upload a photo meeting U.S. passport requirements while completing the Form DS-160. For information about specific photo requirements, please visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/photos.html>.

Scheduling and Preparing for Your Visa Interview

You must schedule a visa interview appointment at the closest U.S Embassy or Consulate. Wait times for interview appointments vary so you should apply early. For an estimate on wait times at your embassy, please visit <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html>. You will likely be required to pay a \$160 visa application fee. Some locations require the fee be paid in advance.

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Gather Required Information

You must prepare the following required documents before your visa interview:

- Passport (valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the United States)
- Form DS-160 confirmation page
- Application fee payment receipt (if you are required to pay before your interview)
- SEVIS fee payment receipt
- Photo (the physical copy of the photo that you uploaded with the Form DS-160)
- Form I-20 (signed in blue ink prior to your interview)
- Your academic qualifications (such as transcripts, diplomas, or any English proficiency tests)
- Financial support documentation (the same you provided to Bellarmine with your application)

Attending Your Visa Interview

Ink-free, digital fingerprint scans are usually taken during your interview, but this varies based on your location. The interview will be conducted in English. Practice your answers, remain calm, and answer simply and honestly. The Consular Officer may ask questions like:

- Why did you choose to study in the U.S. instead of working or studying in your home country?
- Why did you choose Bellarmine and why is it the best school for you?
- What has been your performance as a student in the past? How did you score on your SAT, GRE, or other qualifying exams? What was your GPA?
- How did you gain English proficiency? What are your TOEFL or IELTS test scores?
- How are you funding the entire duration of your education, including tuition, room and board, transportation, and all other expenses?
- After you graduate, will you return home or will you stay in the United States? (It is very important to prove ties to your home country, like your family, property, or other significant connections. Please remember that F and J visas are nonimmigrant categories.)

After the Interview

Following the interview, the Consular Officer will take your passport. Make sure you know how your passport will be returned to you. If your visa is approved, you may also pay a fee for the visa issuance, depending on your location. Fee information is provided at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html>. Once you receive your visa, check to make sure that you received the right type of visa (F-1) and that your name and date of birth are correct and match the information in your passport and I-20. Inform International Support once you have received the visa and remember to plan to arrive at Bellarmine in time for International Orientation.