

Frequently Asked Questions About the SEVIS Fee

The SEVIS Fee has created many questions among advisers, many of which are answered here.

What is the SEVIS fee?

This SEVIS fee is required of all foreign nationals who come to the United States for the purpose of pursuing a full course of study in institutions such as colleges, universities, and language training programs. It is payable one time for each single educational program in which an F-1 or F-3 student participates, extending from the time the student is granted F-1 or F-3 status to the time the student falls out of status, changes status, or departs the U.S. for an extended period of time.

This fee is new and went into effect September 1, 2004. SEVIS fee payments will be used by the United States Department of Homeland Security (OHS) to fund the Student and Exchange Visitor Program. This program makes it possible for international students and exchange visitors to attend schools in the United States. The fee also funds the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), a computer system employed to track international students and exchange visitors during their stays in the United States.

Which Students or Exchange Visitors Must Pay the SEVIS Fee?

- Those who wish to either enter the United States as a student or exchange visitor with a Form 1-20 or 05-2019 issued on or after September 1, 2004.
- Those who are in the United States and wish to change to a student (F-1) or exchange visitor (J-1) status from another non-immigrant status with a Form 1-20 or DS-2019 issued on or after September 1, 2004, e.g., from 8-2 to F-1 student or J-1 exchange visitor status.
- You are seeking an F-1 or F-3 visa from a United States embassy or consulate for first-time attendance in a language training program. In this case, the SEVIS fee must be paid BEFORE visa issuance.
- You hold a valid F-1 or F-3 visa, have been absent from the United States for a period of more than 5 months (not working on your studies during this time with the prior approval of your school), and will re-enter the United States for a new program of study. In this case, the SEVIS fee must be paid BEFORE re-entry to the United States.
- As a resident of a contiguous territory or adjacent island, you are exempt from the visa requirement (for example, you are a citizen of Canada or Bermuda), and will apply for admission at port-of-entry to begin initial attendance at a U.S. school. In this case, the SEVIS fee must be paid BEFORE entry to the United States.

When do Students or Exchange Visitors Pay the SEVIS fee?

- Applicants needing a visa to enter the United States should pay the SEVIS fee at least 3 business days before going to the U.S. embassy or consulate for their visa interview.
- Applicants who are citizens of Canada or Bermuda or residents of certain other islands described in SCFR 212.1a wishing to apply for F-1 or J-1 status should pay the SEVIS fee at least 3 business days before entering the United States at a Port of Entry into the United States.
- Non-immigrants currently in the United States who apply for student or exchange visitor status must pay the fee prior to filing their change of status application.

When Must Continuing F-1 Students Pay the SEVIS Fee?

Continuing students must pay the SEVIS fee before:

- Filing an application for reinstatement when they have been out of status for more than 5 months.
- Applying for a new visa or returning to the United States after an absence of 5 months or more that did not involve authorized overseas study.
- Filing an application for a change of status except for changes between F-1 and F-3.



- F-2 visa holders, the spouse and dependents of the F-1 visa holder, are not required to pay the SEVIS fee.

When Must Continuing Exchange Visitors Pay the SEVIS fee?

Continuing exchange visitors (e.g., J-1 non-immigrants who have begun, but not finished a program) must pay the SEVIS fee before:

- Filing a reinstatement application after a substantive violation after they have been out of status between 121 and 269 days.
- Applying for a change of exchange visitor category, unless the new exchange visitor category is fee exempt (federally sponsored programs with program codes that start with G-1, G-2, or G-3).

How Does One Pay the Fee?

The SEVIS fee is US\$ 350. This fee is separate from and in addition to the visa application fee. The SEVIS fee must be paid by the Internet or by mail. It cannot be paid at a U.S. embassy or consulate and it cannot be paid at port of entry.

To Pay By Mail:

1. Obtain a Form I-901 "Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, and M Nonimmigrants."
Download the form from the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (<https://www.fmjfee.com>)
Request the form by phone at 800.870.3676 (inside the United States)
2. Complete the Form I-901. Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on the I-20 or DS-2019 form.
3. Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft (drawn on U.S. banks only) in the amount of \$350 USD, made payable to "The Department of Homeland Security". Sources for such checks and money orders include banks chartered or operated in the United States, foreign subsidiaries of U.S. banks, or foreign banks that have an arrangement with a U.S. bank to issue a check, money order, or foreign draft that is drawn on a U.S. bank.
4. Mail the completed I-901 and payment to the P.O. Box listed on Form I-901.
5. A Form I-797 receipt notice should be mailed within 3 days of processing the fee. Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents.
By mail, by submitting Form I-901, Fee remittance for Certain F, J, and M Nonimmigrants, together with a check or money order drawn on a U.S. bank and payable in U.S. currency.

To Pay Online: <https://www.fmjfee.com>

1. Find the Form I-901 at Student and Exchange Visitor Program
2. Complete the form online and supply the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information. Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your I-20 or DS-2019 form.
3. Print a copy of the online receipt.
4. Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents.
A third party such as a friend, family member, or other interested party can pay the fee on your behalf through the same means described.

When is the Payment Processed and Verified?

If you pay the SEVIS fee by Internet, your payment is processed immediately and, at the time you make payment, you can print a receipt directly from your computer. This computer-generated receipt can be used to verify you have paid the fee at an embassy, consular post, or port of entry. Mailing the SEVIS fee does not constitute payment. The fee is processed when it is received by OHS. If you mail your payment rather than pay on the Internet, it can take a considerable amount of time for payment to be received and for you to receive a receipt by return mail.



Whether you choose to pay the fee by the Internet or by mail, a paper receipt will be mailed to the address you provide on Form I-901. You may choose to have this receipt sent to you either by regular mail or, at an additional charge, by express delivery.

A paper receipt is not required in order for you to be issued a visa or to be admitted at the port of entry. Embassies and consular posts will be able to verify your fee payment without a receipt in most circumstances if you pay the fee far enough in advance of your visa interview. Electronic payments must be submitted at least 3 business days in advance of the Interview if you will rely on electronic fee verification at the consulate. Mailed payments must be sent in a manner that assures arrival at the OHS address listed on the I-901 at least 3 business days before the scheduled interview.

Is the SEVIS Fee Transferable, in the Case of a New Student Applying to More than One School?

Yes. The Department of Homeland Security has confirmed that fee payment made on one SEVIS ID number (i.e. I-20 form) can be applied to another SEVIS ID number issued to the same individual. The new student will need to bring in proof of the SEVIS ID number connected to the SEVIS fee - i.e. the unused I-20 or OS-2019. Bring the I-20s of both the school for which you paid the fee and the school you will be attending, as well as your SEVIS fee payment receipt, to the consulate or port-of-entry (if you are applying for a visa, you should bring both of the I-20s back to the consulate).

Is the SEVIS Fee Refundable if I am Denied a Visa?

Once paid, the SEVIS fee is non-refundable, unless paid by mistake, even if your visa is denied or, subsequent to issuance of the visa, you choose not to come to the United States. If you applied for an F-1 or F-3 visa and paid the SEVIS fee within the past year but were denied a visa, you do not have to pay the SEVIS fee again as long as you re-apply for the same kind of program within 12 months of the initial denial.

See the section entitled "A Note About Processing Times" for further important fee payment considerations.

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