



Marymount California University

Preparing for Study in the United States

Immigration Information Designed for New MCU International Students



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Preparing for Study in the United States - Immigration Information

In order to enter the U. S. as a student, you must have certain immigration documents such as a passport, a Form I-20, and a student (F-1) visa. This guide explains how & where to get these documents and the basic procedures for applying for a student visa. **If you are currently in the U.S. in active F-1 visa status*, see pages 3 & 4.**

Action Steps for Getting Your F-1 Visa:

- Visit the [Status Portal](#) of the MCU application and download the Confidential Statement of Financial Support. Fill that out and upload it back to the status portal along with your accompanying financial support documents and a copy of the information page of your passport.
- If you are a transfer student (already in the U.S. in active F-1 status), also complete a SEVIS Transfer Form, a link to which can be found in the status portal. Upload it back to the [Status Portal](#).
- All submitted forms will be reviewed by MCU. If everything is in order, your Form I-20 will be processed and mailed to you. You will receive a follow up email if we require further information.
- Receive your MCU I-20 by mail, Pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee (www.fmifee.com) and print the receipt.
- Fill out the U.S. Visa application [Form DS-160](#). Follow the website instructions.
- Contact the [U.S. Embassy](#) in your home country for a visa appointment.
- Attend your visa appointment with all proper documentation.

I-20 Form

This is the “Certificate of Eligibility” Form issued by MCU. You cannot apply for an F-1 visa until you have this form. The Office International Services will issue the I-20 after the following requirements are met:

- ✓ You have been unconditionally accepted into MCU and met the English language requirement
- ✓ You have uploaded the Confidential Statement of Financial Support form along with all appropriate bank documents and copy of the photo page of your passport
- ✓ Submitted your Commitment Deposit via the [Student Portal](#)

If you find any mistakes on your I-20, contact Ryan O’Connell in the Office of International Services at roconnell@marymountcalifornia.edu immediately. Be sure to sign and date your I-20 where indicated.

Financial Responsibilities

Confidential Statement of Financial Support:

International applicants requiring an F-1 visa are required to upload a completed Confidential Statement of Financial Support form. This form indicates the commitment that the applicant or the applicant’s sponsor has financial resources adequate to provide for his or her educational expenses. The amount indicated for your program reflects the total sum of tuition, fees and living expenses for one academic year of study. The amount required to prove is not necessarily the amount of tuition and fees due to MCU.

Accompanying Bank Documentation:

Applicants must also submit either a bank statement or a letter from the bank demonstrating the committed funds are readily available to cover the stated cost for one year of study in your chosen program. Funds must be available in liquid assets (checking or savings account). Money market accounts, stocks, bonds or insurance policies are not acceptable forms of accompanying bank documentation. All bank documents must be in English and in U.S. dollars, or the current exchange rate must be supplied by the bank. All documents must state the exact amount of money available in the account OR must specify that there is more than the required minimum available in the account. Please note that all bank documentation must be dated within six months of initial enrollment at MCU.

Total Cost of Attendance:

The “Estimated Expenses” chart found on the Confidential Statement of Financial Support Form reflects the estimated cost of attendance for the academic year of your program. The amount reflected for your individual program is the amount that must be committed to on your Confidential Statement of Financial Support Form and proven by your accompanying bank documents. The cost of attendance is an estimation of the amount of money it could potentially cost you to go to MCU for one academic year. Please note that personal costs can vary from student to student. In addition, “Personal Expenses” does not include: travel to/from the U.S., expenses for vacation periods and personal spending beyond the listed amount.

If it is your intention to bring a spouse or minor children with you while in F-1 status, please refer to page 2 of the Confidential Statement of Financial Support Form for information on submission of required proof of funds to cover their costs.

Also keep in mind that the Total Cost of Attendance is not the amount you pay to MCU for tuition and fees, but an overall assessment of what it costs for you to live in the U.S. and attend classes. Collecting these financial documents is a requirement of the U.S. Government as part of the F-1 visa process.

I-901 SEVIS Fee

This refers to the mandatory \$200 fee paid directly to the U.S. Government that must be paid in order to complete your visa application. This fee must be paid no later than three (3) days before your appointment with the U.S. Embassy in your home country. Before paying this fee, you must have already received your Form I-20 as you will need information from this form to pay the I-901 SEVIS fee. To pay the fee, please visit www.fmjfee.com. This is a secure United States Customs and Immigration Service website. Upon payment, you must **immediately print your ‘Payment Confirmation’** as you need to submit this with your application at your visa appointment.

You may also pay the fee by mail using the I-901 paper form. All checks and money orders must be made in U.S. dollars and drawn on a bank located in the United States. Do NOT send cash. All checks and money orders must be made payable to the "I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee. Follow mailing instructions on the paper I-901 Form. You must **retrieve your ‘Payment Confirmation’** from www.fmjfee.com just as you would if you were paying the fee online.

If you’ve already in the U.S. and have paid the fee as part of a current F-1 program of study, you should seek to transfer your SEVIS record from your current institution to MCU. See **Transfer of SEVIS Record** below.

F-1 Visa

After you receive your Form I-20, you may apply for an F-1 student visa at the United States Embassy or Consulate that is nearest to your hometown. You should check with the [U.S. Embassy](#) or Consulate for details on how to apply for a visa. In order to avoid delays in travel due to long processing times, schedule your appointment as soon as you know you will be coming to the U.S. Visas may be issued up to 120 days prior to the program start date indicated on your I-20. The non-immigrant visa application fee is currently \$160. A visa issuance fee may also be charged in some cases.

Visa Application

The U.S. uses an [online visa application](#) process for F-1 student visas. If the U.S. Embassy in your home country has not yet implemented the online application process, you should complete a paper application and bring it with you to the visa interview. The Non-Immigrant Visa Application ([Form DS-156](#)) and a Contact Information and Work History Form ([DS-158](#)) can be downloaded by clicking on the respective links. (Males 16-45 years of age must also complete [Form DS-157](#) Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application.)

The Visa Interview

For students seeking their first F-1 visa, a short interview with a consular officer will be required. Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English. It is important to be clear and concise when answering the officer’s questions. It is important to maintain a positive attitude and be honest with the consular official.

You must bring the following with you to your visa interview:

- Passport valid for at least six months beyond the proposed entry date;
- I-20 Form issued by MCU;
- Letter of acceptance from MCU;
- Evidence of financial ability;
- The printed confirmation page from the DS-160 Online Non-immigrant Visa Electronic Application, or where on-line applications are not accepted, a Non-immigrant Visa Application ([Form DS-156](#)) and a Contact Information and Work History Form ([DS-158](#)). (Males 16-45 years of age must also complete [Form DS-157](#) Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application.)
- Proof of payment of appropriate application and processing fees, including the SEVIS I-901 fee;
- An appropriately sized and formatted photo. (Online visa applicants will upload a photo with their DS-160 application.) Guidelines for acceptable photos can be found [here](#).
- Transcripts and diplomas from previous institutions, as well as English Language test scores (TOEFL / IELTS) may also be requested.

Visa Issuance

For most applicants the visa will be issued within a week. However, depending on circumstances, an additional 4-6 weeks or longer may be required for security reviews. You should apply for your visa as early as possible. Upon successful completion of the application process, an F-1 visa will be stamped in your passport. It will indicate the date of issue, period of validity, and whether it is a single or multiple-entry visa. Generally you will be given a multiple entry F-1 Visa valid for the entire length of your academic program as specified on the I-20. Remember that there is no guarantee of receiving a visa. 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 for denial in writing. If your visa application is denied, please contact the Assistant Dean of International Services & Enrollment, Ryan O'Connell at roconnell@marymountcalifornia.edu.

Other Documents and Information to Consider

Passport

To apply for a student visa, you must first obtain a passport issued by your government. If you already have a passport, it must be valid for six months beyond the date of your arrival in the U.S. If not, you must renew it before you leave. While you are in the U.S. your passport must be kept valid for six months into the future at all times. You can renew it in the United States at your country's nearest Consulate or Embassy. Your passport is an important form of identification. Keep it in a safe place.

B-2 Tourist Visa

Do not use this visa type to enter the United States to study. You should have ample time to apply for the appropriate student (F-1) visa. Entering on any type of B-Visa will only cause complications once you arrive in the United States. If you have concerns about obtaining the appropriate student visa, please contact Ryan O'Connell at roconnell@marymountcalifornia.edu.

***Transfer of SEVIS Record – For Students Currently Studying in the U.S.**

If you are currently studying in the United States on an F-1 visa, and have fulfilled your obligations to maintain your F-1 status while in the U.S. at your current institution, you may be eligible for a transfer of your current SEVIS record to MCU. If eligible, you will not need to proceed through the steps listed above, as you are already in possession of an F-1 visa and will have already paid the SEVIS I-901 fee. If your current visa is expired and you plan to travel outside of the U.S. before returning to start at MCU, you will have to renew your visa while outside the U.S.

If you believe you are eligible for a Transfer of SEVIS Record, with the help of your current International Student Advisor, please fill out the MCU "SEVIS Transfer Form". This form will enable MCU to receive your SEVIS record and create an MCU-Issued Form I-20. When it is completed, it should be uploaded back into the International Student Visa Requirements section of the [Status Portal](#).

Requirements for Eligibility of SEVIS Record Transfer:

- Already be in attendance at a SEVP-Approved, U.S. Institution and have paid the I-901 Fee
- Maintain your current F-1 status and possess an Active SEVIS record (no break in F-1 status)
- Be unconditionally accepted in Marymount California University
- Upload a completed Confidential Statement of Financial Support, accompanying bank documents and copy of the information/picture page of your passport to the [Status Portal](#)
- Fill out MCU's SEVIS Transfer Verification Form with your current International Student Advisor.

If your SEVIS record is in any other status than “Active”, please contact Ryan O’Connell at roconnell@marymountcalifornia.edu to inquire on how to proceed to receive your MCU Form I-20.

Lastly, if you are in the United States in any other visa category besides F-1, or have remained in the U.S. on an expired visa, and have specific questions about whether or not you are eligible to Study in the United States, please contact Ryan O’Connell at roconnell@marymountcalifornia.edu to ask about your eligibility.