Guide to Applying for a Non-Immigrant Visa

University of Central Arkansas

You belong
Congratulations!
You have been accepted to the University of Central Arkansas!

In your admission packet, you should have received a Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Visa Status (F-1) Form I-20 or Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Visa Status (J-1) Form DS-2019.

If your I-20 or DS-2019 is lost, damaged or contains incorrect information, contact the Office of International Admissions as soon as possible. The preferred method of communication is email, as our time zones may vary and voice over phone (or internet) transmission may be of poor quality. For a replacement I-20 or DS-2019, contact the Office of International Admissions at: oipadmission@uca.edu.

If you decide not to attend UCA, please contact us at: oipservices@uca.edu, so that we will know not to anticipate your arrival. Also, though not required, it would be helpful to us if you would let us know the reason for your decision.

Now, you need to apply for a student visa as soon as possible.

The following has been abridged from travel.state.gov. See the official website for detailed information. Become familiar with the government's description of requirements. Use the following information only as a guide.
Before You Go To Your Visa Interview

1) **Read the instructions** on your Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Visa Status (F-1) Form I-20 and **Complete the required fields** for Item 11 on your I-20.

2) **File a DS-160**, Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application, found at: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html). You will receive a confirmation of successful submission. Print this confirmation as you will need to bring it with you to your visa interview.

   - **Pay the DS-160 application fee.** In October 2012, this fee was $160.00 USD. Bring proof of this payment to your visa interview.

   - **Pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee.** For information on how to pay, see the [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com) website. In October 2012, this fee was $180.00 USD for J-1 visa applicants and $200.00 USD for F-1 visa applicants. Bring proof of this payment to your visa interview.

   - **NOTE:** Your SEVIS number is located above the barcode on your I-20 or DS-2019. UCA’s School Code is: NOL214F10321000.

3) **Contact the U.S. embassy or consulate** at which you wish to apply to confirm whether you need to be interviewed by a consular officer, and to schedule an interview. If the embassy or consulate at which you apply informs that you must have a visa interview, the visa application process cannot be completed until you appear for an interview with a consular officer. **Schedule a visa interview.**

   - To find the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your area, please visit: [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov)

   - You should also check the visa wait times before making travel arrangements. You can find visa wait times at: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html)
At Your Visa Interview

4) Go to your visa interview. It is essential that you arrive on time. If you do not, you may have to reschedule your visa appointment. Bring all the documents listed below and your receipts for payment.

- Documents you will need for your appointment:
  - Form I-20 or Form DS-160
  - Receipt of DS-160 application fee
  - SEVIS I-901 fee receipt
  - A passport, valid at least 6 months beyond your stay in the US
  - One 2x2 photograph
- This photograph must comply with the requirements found at: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html)
- Documents you may need for your appointment:
  - Transcripts from schools attended
  - Scores from any standardized tests involved in your admission to UCA, for example: TOEFL, IELTS, SAT, ACT, GRE, GMAT
  - Financial evidence proving you or your sponsor has sufficient funds to support your stay in the US

** You will not be allowed to work more than 20 hours per week on-campus while school is in session. Campus employment is not guaranteed. Off-campus employment is authorized only by USCIS and requires extenuating circumstances beyond your control - such authorization CANNOT be expected.

5) Answer all questions honestly. If you lie to a U.S. Immigration Officer to obtain a visa benefit, your lie may constitute immigration fraud, which carries severe immigration penalties. If your Consular Official believes that you may be concealing or altering material facts to your visa application, your student visa application may be denied.
Important Concepts to Keep In Mind

⇒ F-1 visas and J-1 visas are both non-immigrant visas. Literally, this means that these visas are NOT USED TO IMMIGRATE to the United States. If you have extensive family connections in the United States, but very few outside of the United States, or even in your home country, your Consular Official may question your intention in obtaining a non-immigrant visa. J-1 visa holders may even have a two-year residency requirement, meaning that you must return to your home country for two years before applying for a immigrant visa.

⇒ F-1 visas are issued to students who wish to study in the United States. This visa is NOT an employment visa, family immigration visa, tourist visa or any other type of visa. Since the intention is to come to the U.S. to study, and not work, successful non-immigrant students should be able to demonstrate their ability to finance their education. If you cannot clearly establish your intent to study in the U.S. and your ability to pay for your studies, your Consular Official may deny your visa application.

⇒ J-1 visas are specific to the category in which the DS-2019 was issued. For example, if your visa category states that you are a non-degree seeking university student, your intention must be to study at the university, but not for purposes of pursuing a degree. The successful non-immigrant visa candidate should be able to demonstrate his/her financial ability to finance their stay in the United States. If you are sponsored by your government, this may mean providing your Consular Official with documentation of that fact. If you cannot clearly establish your intent to satisfy the visa category for which your DS-2019 was issued and your ability to finance your stay in the United States, your Consular Official may deny your visa application.

⇒ Consular Officials have discretionary authority in the issuance of all visas. Although you may feel as though you have met the requirements of the visa for which you are applying, as a representative of the United States, the Consular Official makes the ultimate decision in whether or not to issue you a visa.
If Your Visa Is Denied

1) Consider whether you want to apply again for a student visa. If you do, your SEVIS fee is valid for one year, so you should not have to pay it again if you apply within one year of your date of initial payment.

2) Evaluate the reasons for your denial. It is important to understand the reason why your visa application was denied. If your circumstances do not change before your next visa interview, you will likely receive the same result. If for instance, the Consular Official did not believe that you had sufficient resources for your study in the United States, you will need to gather additional documentation to clearly demonstrate your financial capacity or that of your sponsor.

3) Complete a Deferral Request Form. As most students apply for a student visa within three months of the start date of their program of study, a denial likely means that there is not sufficient time to apply for a student visa again - also, you may not have sufficient time to change your circumstances prior to applying again. In order to attend UCA at a later semester, you will need to receive new admission letters and a new I-20 or DS-2019. To complete a Deferral Request, see: http://uca.edu/international/admissions/deferral-request/. READ the instructions prior to completion. NOTE: Your first deferral is free; all subsequent deferrals will cost an additional fee.

4) Receive your new admission packet and I-20 or DS-2019. Proper planning is key in ensuring that you receive your documents in time to apply for a visa and arrive in time for orientation. Do not wait until the last minute to begin the deferral process.

5) Schedule another student visa interview at your nearest U.S. embassy or consulate.

Note: If you cannot attend UCA due to a visa denial, UCA will refund your housing deposit. Submit your request to housing@uca.edu.
After Your Visa Is Approved

1) **Book your flight.** Check the arrival dates indicated in your admission packet prior to booking! Students arriving early will be responsible for their own transportation and temporary housing accommodations. UCA Housing *may* have dormitories and host families available prior to scheduled arrival dates for an additional charge; however, this option is not always available. **Late arrivals may be assessed late fees.** These fees help to compensate for the additional individual attention that late arriving students require in order to begin classes at UCA.

2) **Complete and submit your Arrival Form.** In order to schedule appropriate transportation and ensure that accommodations are available when you arrive, it is vital that you submit your arrival information to oips-services@uca.edu. If you have any special accommodation needs, this is the time to convey that information to our International Student and Scholar Services Coordinator.

3) **Review your Pre-Arrival Guide.** This guide will assist you in your preparation for your studies at UCA. Items covered include: what to bring to UCA, what to buy after you arrive, American customs to expect, and many other important topics.

4) **Arrive at UCA!** We look forward to meeting you! If your flight is delayed or you miss your flight, contact the Office of International Programs as soon as possible, so that we can assist with your transportation. If it is after hours and our office is closed, but you need immediate assistance, contact the UCA Police Department at (501) 450-3111, and they will contact someone from our office to assist you.

5) **Attend the mandatory International Student Orientation.** You will be given an overview of life at UCA and in the United States, take any necessary placement tests, meet with an advisor, register for classes, pay your tuition and fees, get any required vaccinations, receive a tour of campus, and much more!
Visit www.uca.edu/international for more information for incoming international students.