Applying for Your Student Visa (New Students)
Is this webinar for me?

• You have an I-20 or DS-2019 from UC Berkeley
• You are a new F-1/J-1 Degree-seeking Student or new UCEAP Exchange Student
  • A J-1 student has one of the following categories listed in Section 4 of the DS-2019: STUDENT-NON-DEGREE, STUDENT BACHELORS, STUDENT MASTERS OR STUDENT DOCTORATE.
• You are NOT a J-1 Scholar, post-doc, or Visiting Student Researcher
• You have questions about current travel and immigration requirements!
• Other questions: Employment, changing visa categories, academic issues? Please meet with a BIO advisor!
Enrollment Requirements

• Reminder- F-1/J-1 students are required to enroll [full-time].

• Online coursework is very limited! Your enrollment must be primarily in-person coursework. Only 1 course or 3 units of online coursework is allowed due to normal F/J visa regulations.

• You can search for classes using the [Berkeley Academic guide], which also allows you to filter for mode of instruction.

• A class is 100% online if the course [instructional mode] mode is listed as “Online” or “Web-based”.

• Courses considered “in-person” are coded with “In Person” [instructional mode]
Late Arrival?

• BIO will work with students who face arrival difficulties for Spring 2024
• This may include: late arrivals, readmission and return after deferral/withdrawal, and how to receive updated I-20/DS-2019 documents if needed.

• Arriving after the start of instruction for Spring 2024?

  **Step 1:**
  • **EAP (Exchange) students** should contact UCEAP to determine if they will be allowed to enter after the start of the term.
  • **Degree seeking students:** First contact your academic department to see what options are possible for you.

  **Step 2:**
  • **Contact BIO:** internationaloffice@berkeley.edu. We’ll determine the best next steps.
Cancellation? Admission Deferral?

• **Admissions Deferrals** - If you have been approved for an official deferral of your admission to a future semester, please **notify Berkeley International Office**. Upon notification by Admissions or UCEAP of your official deferral, we will work with you to adjust your I-20 or DS-2019 start date to the future term.

• **How do I request a deferral?**
  - **EAP students** should contact UCEAP
  - **Degree-seeking undergraduates** will need to contact the **Office of Admissions** to determine if you have an option to defer to a future semester.
  - **Degree-seeking graduate students** must communicate with their academic department regarding any option to defer.

• **Withdrawal** - **Contact Berkeley International Office** regarding your cancellation/withdrawal for approval prior to withdrawal or cancellation.
  - Review the **Registrar’s Cancellation/Withdrawal information** regarding cancellation/withdrawal processes, impacts to your UC Berkeley admission, tuition/fees, and deadlines.
  - If you intend to attend UC Berkeley in the future, BIO recommends consulting with your College adviser (undergrads) or your department (graduate) before taking any steps to cancel or withdraw.
What type of visa do I need?

Non-immigrant visa

Sponsored by your school

Allow you to remain in the U.S. for duration of status

Employment benefits

F-1 or J-1? Which status is right for you?
Other visa categories that allow study:
H4, J-2, E-2, TD

B1, B2, and F-2 prohibit full-time study
The Application Process

1. (NEW/READMITTED STUDENTS) Submit the online Non-Immigrant Information Form (NIF)
3. Pay SEVIS fee
4. Complete online visa application (Form DS-160)
5. Pay visa application fee
6. Schedule visa interview appointment
7. Attend visa interview
8. Receive passport back with visa
Apply Early

**NIF Processing**: 10-15 business days
- F-1 I-20s & J-1 DS-2019s will be emailed
- See the [Arrival Process Timeline](#) for an overview

**Visa Processing time**
- Wait times for visa appointments and processing vary by location; apply as early as possible to avoid delays.
- Find your consulate location and [current wait times](#).

Visa application fees, forms and appointment scheduling are all accessible online.
Your I-20 or DS-2019

- Certificate of Eligibility; Allows you to apply for an F-1 or J-1 student visa.
- Contains details about you, your school, and program of study.
- To request your I-20 or DS-2019, you must complete the Non-immigrant Information Form (NIF).
- BIO will email this document to you.

SEVIS ID number is located in the top right corner.
Pay the SEVIS Fee

SEVIS: Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

- Make this payment after receiving SEVIS ID and at least 3 days before applying for a visa.
- The fee amount is subject to change, you may pay online at and find the most up-to-date information at: www.fmjfee.com
- Print your receipt after payment!

After paying the SEVIS fee, Canadian citizens do not need to complete the remaining steps for visa application. Canadian citizens will apply at the border with required arrival documents.
Find the U.S. Embassy or Consulate near you

- Go to [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov).
- Check your local embassy or consulate’s website for specific visa application instructions.
- Look for instructions to apply for a Non-Immigrant Visa.
Form DS-160

Online visa application form for all non-immigrant visas.

• NOTE: Visas cannot be issued from inside the United States. You must be physically present in the country in which you are applying for the visa.
• Select your embassy location first.
• When completed, print the confirmation page with a barcode when complete.
DS-160 Tips

U.S. Point of Contact:
- Berkeley International Office - you can use our address/phone and the name of the DSO on your I-20/DS-2019
- U.S.-based Family member or friend

Address where you will stay in the U.S.
- It’s okay if you don’t know where you will live long-term
- Provide an address where you may stay when you first arrive (hotel, friend’s house, etc)

Photo
- Upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160.
- Check the photo guidelines on the official website
Pay the visa application fee

Non-refundable fee

• Sometimes called the “MRV” fee or “NIV” application fee.
• Payment instructions are specific to your local U.S. embassy.
• See the Dept. of State website for current fees
• Print your receipt!
Schedule visa interview appointment

Follow instructions given by the U.S. embassy or consulate where you intend to apply.

Do not wait to schedule! Wait times for appointments can be long during summer months. Schedule as soon as possible!
Congratulations! You've been admitted.

Preparing for the interview

Check the U.S. embassy website for a complete list of documents required for the interview.

Prepare to bring:
• Passport
• I-20 or DS-2019
• Acceptance letter (New Students) or / Proof of enrollment (readmitted students)
• Proof of funding (financial statements, award letters)
• SEVIS Fee receipt
• DS-160 Confirmation page
The interview

What to expect
• Security at the U.S. Embassy - find out what items will not be allowed inside the building before you go.
• Wait for your number to be called.
• A brief interview; only a few minutes!

The interviewer is interested in:
• Your studies
• Non-immigrant intent
• Financial ability
• Language ability
Interview Tips

• Answer questions concisely and honestly.

• Be aware that the consulate may also conduct a social media review. Be smart about what information you post online.

• If you don't understand something, don’t be afraid to ask.

• Be respectful and courteous.
Receive visa

Check U.S. embassy website for instructions for passport pick-up or delivery.

Check the visa for accuracy

- Spelling of your name
- Visa type: F-1 or J-1

The maximum length of the visa and number of entries is determined by the visa category and country of citizenship, and is subject to the visa officer’s discretion. See the Reciprocity Table for your country of citizenship and the visa category for more information.
Security Checks

- May cause a delay in visa processing, called “Administrative Processing”. Contact BIO if you have concerns about a delayed arrival.
- Some cases may resolve in a few weeks. Average processing is 60-90 days, but in some cases can take as long as 6 months.
- U.S. Dept. of State Administrative Processing Information
- Berkeley International Office security check information
Don’t panic if your visa is denied!

Ask for the reason of denial in writing.

Make detailed notes about the interview (officer’s name, questions asked, and your answers).

Email internationaloffice@berkeley.edu and recount details including the location of the consulate and the date and time of your interview.

After consulting with a BIO advisor, you may consider to re-apply with additional information that addresses the denial reason.
Visas for family

Visas for Dependents

• F-2
• J-2

Who’s eligible for F-2/J-2?
• Children under 21
• Legally married spouse

How do they apply for F-2/J-2 visa?
• Same DS-160 process!
• May apply with the F-1 or J-1 or independently
• Will need their own documents and copies of the F-1/J-1 documents
• For more information see BIO Inviting Family webpage
NEW STUDENTS: You can enter the U.S. up to **30 days** before the Program Start Date on the I-20 or DS-2019.

**Check your I-20 or DS-2019**

Students who **transfer** their I-20/DS-2019 are not subject to the 30-day limit.

**BIO recommends entering at least 1 week before your classes begin**

**Make sure you arrive before any required Orientation events!**
Preparing for Arrival

• Carry all required documents with you, not in your checked bag!
• If possible, arrive during BIO Office hours Monday-Friday from 10-12 or 1-4pm. If you have a problem during arrival, request that CBP call BIO.
• Do not bring any restricted items. Make sure you follow rules regarding travel with medications, food, or pets.
• Medical and recreational marijuana remains illegal under U.S. federal law. Possession or use may result in deportation or incarceration.
• It is illegal to bring drug paraphernalia into the United States, unless prescribed for authentic medical conditions such as diabetes.
• Be aware that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) may inspect your electronic devices.
• See the ACLU’s tips regarding precautions you can take to prepare your devices for travel.
Required Arrival Documents

Be prepared to present the following documents to the CBP Officer:

• Passport (valid for at least 6 months into the future) with a valid nonimmigrant visa (if applicable)
• Original form I-20 or DS-2019
• Evidence of financial resources (see Required Funding Documentation)
• Proof of UC Berkeley admission (new students) or enrollment (current students)
• Proof of SEVIS fee payment

Officers may ask you questions about your reason for entering the U.S., where you are traveling, or about your academic program.

If you encounter problems at entry, please contact Berkeley International Office as soon as possible:
http://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/contact-us
internationaloffice.berkeley.edu

General questions: internationaloffice@berkeley.edu

NIF questions: nif@berkeley.edu

510-642-2818

Student Advising Hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday (No advising on Wednesday!):

10am-12pm and 1pm-4pm (PT)

https://internationaloffice.berkeley.edu/students/student-services