

FAQs About The US F1-Visa

FAQS ABOUT THE VISA APPLICATION PROCESS

Q. I made a mistake while filling the DS-160 and I already submitted it. What do I do?

A. Fill a new DS160 and submit it. If you have not yet taken a visa date, use the new DS160 form number while booking the date and just ignore the incorrectly filled form. If you have already booked a visa date, then carry a print of your new as well as old DS160 confirmation page during your OFC appointment and tell them to link your application with the new DS160 form. They will do it for you.

Q. Can I cancel/reschedule the visa appointment?

You can cancel/reschedule your visa appointment only 1 time without the payment of any additional fees. Once you cancel an existing appointment you can re-book a new appointment using the same DS160 form number and the same Visa fee payment receipt number.

Q. How early should I book my visa date and how early can I travel to the US?

You can get a visa date in about 7 to 10 working days. For instance if you try booking a date on 1st June, you should see dates of around 7th June to 15th June available.

Please note that you cannot appear for your visa interview more than 120 days before the start date on your program (as mentioned in the 'No later than' date on the I-20). You will not be allowed to enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start date as on your I-20.

Q. How do I know if my visa is granted? How long does it take for my passport to arrive?

During the interview if your visa is approved, the visa officer will tell you so and keep your passport. You can collect your passport from the OFC office. You will get an email notifying about the same and the usual time for the passport to be ready for collection is about 24 to 48 hours. You may opt for the passport to be delivered by courier by paying an additional charge. The courier facility may not be available at all locations.

If the visa is rejected, your passport is returned to you immediately.

Q. Can I enter the US and visit a friend/relative before the start of my program?

Yes you can. You can enter the US through any airport (but not more than 30 days prior to the start of your program). You may choose to spend a few days with family/friend and then go to the university

Q. If my visa is rejected, how soon can I reapply, and how many times? Do I have to pay the visa fees again?

You can reapply for the visa any number of times, and there is no minimum wait period between visas. You can take the very next available date.

To reapply for the visa, you will have to pay the visa application fees again but you do not have to pay the SEVIS fees again.

Q. Can I get a visa for one university and then attend another university?

If you already applied for a visa using the I20 of one university and got it approved, and then later on decide to go to another university, it is recommended that you reapply for the visa (and reappear for the visa interview) using the I20 of the new university and get a fresh visa stamped on your passport.

If you do not reapply for the visa with the I20 of the new university, you will then have to follow a 'Transfer-out- Transfer-in' process. You will have to contact the university whose name appears on your visa and tell them of your intent to join another university. You will still have to go to your old university first and ask them to do a 'transfer-out' process. This can be done only after you official report at the old university. Transfer-out process takes time, and if the university is not able to do it before the start of your new university's program, you will have to end up spending a semester at the old university. So it's highly recommended that you opt for reapplying for the visa with the new university's I20 while in India, rather than opting for the transfer process.

ABOUT VISA INTERVIEW PREPARATIONS

The objective of the US visa interview is to assess

- **Your preparedness and understanding of the course/program you are planning to pursue.**
- **Your ability to afford your education costs.**

It is recommend that you be

1: Be as honest as possible

2: Be as natural as possible. DO NOT 'by heart' any answers.

One of the main reasons for visa rejections are because the visa officers feel that you are not being honest and are giving scripted answers.

How much funds should you so?

There is no specific answer to this. But if you can reasonably demonstrate that you have the ability to arrange Rs 305-40 Lakhs over the course of your education, it should be sufficient. This DOES NOT mean that you need to have Rs 40L in your savings account. This amount can be a combination of:

- Education loan
- Bank/Company/Credit Society FD's
- Shares & Mutual Fund Investments
- PPF
- Company PF/Gratuity Statements
- Insurance Surrender values
- Investments like NSC, Post Office MIS, RBI Bonds etc

You do not have to show twice the amount of your I20.

What financial documents should you carry with you to the visa and will the visa officer scrutinize them?

The Visa Officer, in most cases, will not go into details of the financial documents and not scrutinize them. They will only ask you on how you intend to pay for your education and when they do, you only have to give them an overview of it. Only in very few cases, would they ask you for the relevant documents. There is no such list of accepted or required documents that the consulate prescribes. So you will have to carry whichever apply in your case. These would include:

- Loan approval and/or loan application letter. (in case you are applying for a loan)

- Your Bank Passbooks or Monthly/quarterly Bank Account transaction statements (in case your bank does not issue a passbook). The statements/passbooks should show transactions for the past 3 to 4 months (preferably 6 months).
- Original fixed deposit receipts.
- A statement of your Demat account showing the shares/mutual funds you own and their current market value.
- Originals of NSC/NSS certificates, PPF passbooks etc
- Tax returns or Form 16 for the past one or two years of your sponsors only.
- Two recent salary slips of your sponsor (in case your sponsor is employed)

Online prints of bank statements, DEMAT Statements, Salary slips etc are acceptable. They need not be certified by anybody.

Please note that, you will carry only those documents where you have substantial amount of funds available. For instance, if most of your funds are in Bank FDs and with very little money in Savings Accounts, then you need not carry your bank passbooks/statements, but can only carry your FD Receipts.

You DO NOT require the following documents

- CA statements or certificates. You do not need CA certificates at all
- Property papers or property valuations. They are NOT required for the visa.
- Gold/Car/Assets valuations

Can I tell the visa officer that I am taking an education loan? Will the visa officer think I will work in the US to repay the loan?

Yes, it is absolutely safe to tell the visa officer that you are taking an education loan.

Visa officers do not care much about what you intend to do after your masters. They are however, interested in knowing that you have funds to pay for your education. Hence a bank loan becomes a very safe funding option as a bank, once it has sanctioned a loan, will not back out from giving you the money.

Can I show funds in Co-operatives banks or private banks?

Yes. Your funds can be in Co-operatives banks or private banks or credit societies. Statements/Passbooks/Deposits in Co-operatives banks or private banks are accepted.

Do you have to show a minimum amount in savings or can all my money be in FDs or Shares?

You can show all your investments in FD's or Shares or any other form and it is not necessary to show your saving accounts at all.

Can I show my property?

No you can't. The visa officer is not interested in your property value or your net worth. They are interested in knowing how you plan to pay for your tuition and living. So unless you plan to sell off the property, it doesn't matter what its value is as the property cannot pay for your education. Also saying that you plan to sell off your property eventually can raise lot of questions, so its best to avoid doing that.

Can I show my brother/sister/uncle who lives in the US/abroad as my sponsor?

Yes you can.

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR

Why do you want to do an MS/MBA and why at this Univ?

In your answer, you can talk about the overall contents of the course (you can mention specific topics or broad subject areas that the course covers) and how this aligns with your interests and/or career goals.

- The visa officer may ask you more about your areas of interests. For example if you say your interests lie in areas of 'Data Analytics', the Visa officer may ask you 'what is data analytics'.

Which other universities have you applied to and where all did you receive admits from?

Mention the names of other univs you applied to.

If you have only 1 admit, it is okay to mention that. It does not in any way harm your chances of getting a visa.

Why did you choose this university over your other admits?

Talk about what aspects of the university you liked that made you choose this university/program. Talk preferably about the fact that your chosen university offers a slightly more exhaustive coursework in your area of interest, talk of the positive feedback you received about the program from some of the current students at the university. If funding from the university was one of the reasons for selecting it, you can mention that as the reason as well.

How did you go about selecting your univs?

You can talk about your research you did on several forums, that you spoke to some students studying at the univs, looked up the curriculum that the programs offered and finally decided on the universities.

What are plans after MS

DO NOT SAY – "I will return back to India".

Instead, talk in terms of what kind of a career or job you would ideally like to pursue after you graduate from the master's program (do not talk about the location of where you would like to work. Do not specifically mention that you will work in the US or come back to India). If the visa officer specifically ask if you would you take up a job or an internship in the US during your after your Masters, you can say 'Yes'. You can say that you would like to take up an internship or some assignment during your 1 year OPT period (OPT is the 1 year authorization you get to legally work in the US after you complete your degree),

Who's paying for your education or how do you plan to pay for your education?

- Mention your overall plan for paying for your education. If you taking an education loan, it is absolutely fine to mention about it.
- Do not get into details of the details of your sponsor's finances unless asked so. For instance if you have plans of taking a loan of Rs 20L and the rest is going to be paid by your parents, when asked how you plan to pay for your education, just mention that: I will be taking an education loan worth Rs 20 Lakhs and the rest of the costs will be borne by my parents.
- If the visa officer specifically asks you – how much funds your parents/sponsor have – only then tell them the approximate amount of funds that they have. Given details of the split up if asked for.

- If asked what your sponsors do and their incomes, then mention about their profession and their approximate annual income.

Note: All amounts that you mention have to be in Indian Rupees only. Do not convert them to US dollars and mention them (unless your sponsor's funds/salaries are in US dollars)

The visa interview is just a minute or two long conversation with the visa officer. Ideally the visa officer can ask any questions, and you are expected to give honest answers. Hence do not try to write down the answers and 'rote learn' them. If you do not know an answer to a particular question, it is okay to say so.

PS: There is no dress code for the visa. Wear whatever you are comfortable in. Wearing formals is not required.

Please contact us if you have any questions.

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